

# Canterbury Women

Since 1893



1890

1891



JUDE HOWARD

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Canterbury  
Women

Since 1893

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO  
THE MEMORY OF MARIE LANCELY WALSHAW  
WHO INSPIRED THIS WORK BUT DID NOT LIVE  
TO HOLD IT IN HER HANDS





# Canterbury Women

Since 1893

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# Foreword

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INTERNATIONAL Women's Year — 1975 — stimulated much discussion about women's role in New Zealand society today. It showed clearly that women underrate their own value to their home, community and nation, continually and persistently, and need to see the role of homemaking in its wider importance. It soon became clear that a year would not be enough time in which to challenge these attitudes which were detrimental to everybody, so International Women's Year became a Decade. The question which now persists is how to challenge and change women's attitudes to themselves and one another. This volume is our attempt to record some of what has happened in the women's movement, because many younger women have questioned whether there had indeed been any progress since 1893. The first half of the Decade is nearly over. It is fitting that this work should now become available to the public and particularly to schools and libraries so that some of these questions can be answered and the young assured that they have foundations on which to build, laid by earlier generations.

In the future women will have to be prepared to contribute much more to the community — to recognize that in needs such as town planning they have expertise resulting from daily living which is invaluable to our planners. Who know better about difficult access to buses, buildings and streets? Who fare worse from badly planned shopping centres? More, competent women are needed in government at all levels. I never cease to admire the way housekeeping money is so expertly handled by so many or to feel that this skill should be used to help solve our country's larger financial problems. It seems to me that future women will recognize three phases in their lives, or three separate careers — pre-marriage, marriage itself and bringing up their children, and post-family — and that marriage will be seen by more and more people as an equal partnership, which of course it has always been.

To the many people who have contributed to this work I would like to add my personal word of appreciation — to Mrs Walshaw, Mrs Locke and Mrs Newman, to the Committee on Women, to Sir Wilfred Perry, and to Mr Len Walshaw who has taken up the challenge where Lancelot left off — without their backing this work could not have been published.

JUDITH HAY

*Christchurch, February 1979*



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Abbreviations: CM, Canterbury Museum; NZG, *New Zealand Graphic*; WP, *Weekly Press*.



# Introduction

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THE idea for this book arose during an exhibition staged by combined churchwomen at the Christchurch Town Hall in 1975. Called "Partnership in Progress", it showed the many roles that women in Canterbury had played since the vote was gained in 1893. As Mayoress of Christchurch and chairwoman of the International Women's Year Committee, Judith Hay called a meeting of people interested in producing a book on the same theme. Lancelly Walshaw agreed to act as co-ordinator.

The book does not claim to be a comprehensive history. It does not take any particular viewpoint or argue any particular case. Each contributor has written about her topic in her own way, but all have tried to show how women have fared and the activities they have been engaged in since Canterbury led the country in winning the franchise.

There are many gaps in this record, the most obvious of which is South Canterbury. The Committee hopes that those who note the omission of some outstanding woman, event or movement will be stimulated to write about the subject. At the very least, any typed or printed papers, tape recordings and photographs should be deposited at one of our libraries or lent for copying. The librarians for their part will produce any material they hold, to assist new writers, as they have done for this book.

Everywhere the history of women has been neglected until quite recently and it is not easy to retrieve information that has been ignored. One sad aspect is that people who give sterling service to the community tend to be quickly forgotten once they have dropped out of the news. This needs to be remedied if history is to be understood at the grassroots and not seen almost exclusively through the actions of those in high places.

All the work for this book has been done "for love". The contributors have given many hours of their time in research, discussion, interviews and writing. Already several people among

the many interviewed have died; it is good to know that their knowledge has not been lost but is kept here for all to appreciate.

Nothing is ever achieved without encouragement. The Committee cannot list everyone who has helped with this project but would like to acknowledge with gratitude the work of the following: Lynne Ciochetto, Judith Hay, Prue Hockley, Marian Ilyes, Elsie Locke, Stephen McLoy of the New Zealand Room in the Canterbury Public Library, Robin Muir at the Pegasus Press, Barbara Smith, Joan Woodward at the Canterbury Museum, and Fiona Wright at the library of the *Christchurch Star*.

# The National Council of Women

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IN 1893 the women of New Zealand gained the right to vote. Shortly after this Mrs Kate Sheppard, the Women's Christian Temperance Union Superintendent for Women's Suffrage, went to England, where she was greatly impressed by the recently-formed International Council of Women; on her return to New Zealand she persuaded her friends in the Canterbury Women's Institute to initiate the formation of a similar council in the Colony.

On 13 April 1896 Miss Sherriff Bain, President of the C.W.I., opened a Women's Convention in the Provincial Council Chambers with these touching and optimistic words: "For the first time in history enfranchised women are gathered together on the affairs of state." Invited delegates attended from Women's Institutes in Malvern, Wellington and Canterbury, Women's Political Leagues in Auckland, Gisborne, Wanganui and Christchurch, the Wellington Women's Democratic League, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Delegates from Canterbury were Mrs Alley, Mrs Cooper, Mrs Widdowson and Mrs Sheppard.

The addresses and debates were open to the public. "The large attendance shows that considerable sections of the public look with sympathy upon the efforts of the delegates to achieve the high aims with which they have gathered together, and the proceedings thoroughly deserve the attention they have received," said the *Lyttelton Times*. "They have taken a very sensible step in their own interests, and paid an appropriate compliment to a devoted worker, by resolving the Convention into a National Council and appointing Mrs K. Sheppard as its first President." Mrs Ada Wells and Miss Sherriff Bain, Christchurch women of great ability, were appointed Secretary and Treasurer of the newly-formed National Council, which remained a national body until it went into recess—the last record appears in 1906.

Addresses advocating the most far-reaching reforms were given throughout the week of the Convention. Of the thirty-five resolutions passed, the following, put forward by Mrs Sheppard, raised the most public controversy: "That in all cases where a woman elects to superintend her own household and to be the mother of children, there shall be a law attaching a certain just share of her husband's earnings or income for her separate use, payable, if she so desires it, into her own account."

Mrs T. E. Taylor presented a paper on marriage and divorce, asking that the grounds for divorce be the same for both men and women, or failing that, that judical separation be made easier. She pointed out that a great safeguard against ill-assorted marriages would be to extend the opportunities for men and women to meet and get to know one another before marriage.

Professor A. W. Bickerton, speaking on housing difficulties, advocated that "communities of families with similar interests—preferably young and in fairly large numbers" should live in what he called "Unitary Homes". By sharing in the work and the care of children, women would have more leisure to take part in activities outside the home. True family-life would come when families lived not only for themselves but also for the community. Under the present system, he said, it was the selfish who succeeded and the altruistic who failed.

These ideas did not meet with unanimous approval but a resolution was passed "that in the opinion of the Council all the land in any country belongs to the people of that country".

Other addresses were entitled: "Old Age Pensions", "How It Can Be Done—Constructive Socialism", "The New Woman", "Party Government in the 'Elective' Executive", "The Treatment of Criminals", "Police Reform", "Technical Education", "Property Laws", "Women in Service to the State—Equal Opportunity". Some of the things asked for included revision of the labour laws, an eight-hour-day, abolition of the party system in government, prison reform, women jurors, old age pensions, repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, and raising of the age of consent. It was also agreed that there would be no reference to party politics at any future meetings.

It was clear to the *Lyttelton Times* that these unquestionably well-informed and able women were determined to concern themselves with the laws, educational opportunities and existing social inequalities, particularly as they affected women and children. The comment of the *Evening Post* was, however, "When



all the resolutions of the N.C.W. are put into effect, most men, we venture to think, will consider that this country will be worth living out of”!

In the following years the Council met annually in the different main centres, keeping in contact during the year by correspondence.

In 1897 the Council met in Christchurch, additional organisations represented being the Salvation Army and the Fabian Society. Again resolutions were passed concerning wives' incomes, equal pay for equal work, civil and political disabilities of women, old age pensions, and the need for women on Charitable Aid Boards. The addresses were open to the public. After the first of what became annual addresses on Peace and Arbitration, by Miss Sherriff Bain, a resolution asking for arbitration and disarmament instead of war was passed—to be communicated to all women's organisations throughout the Colonies.

There were also further resolutions on guardianship of children and equal conditions for divorce.

Miss Hookham of Christchurch, in speaking of the development of technical education, urged that both boys and girls be taught cooking, carpentry and sewing: “It is not seen why every girl should be a dressmaker any more than every boy a sailor.”

A former Christchurch Hospital nurse, Mrs C. Simpson, spoke strongly in support of an eight-hour-day for nurses. The establishment of industrial co-operatives was approved. “The Criminal Code and the Prison” was the subject of another most interesting address. All these matters were recorded in the Council's published transactions.

The third annual meeting was held in 1898 at Wellington, and took place at Bellamy's—which, according to contemporary reports, “never saw a stranger sight”, and which caused speculation from Mrs Sheppard on the prophetic nature of women's advent into the Parliamentary Buildings.

Further papers were given on familiar topics, and an address on women in industry was read by Miss Christina Henderson, who urged that girls come within the Masters and Apprentices' Bill which laid down a minimum employment age—in domestic work some girls were employed at the age of ten.

A speaker on “Parental Responsibility” put forward the following ideas: “To my mind, a woman is guilty of a very serious offence if she becomes with child during any part of her life, without first having ensured to that child physically, mentally

and morally the right of every human being to a pure and wholesome birth and childhood." She added, "Have your boys and girls taught, if possible, to ride, drive, cycle, row and swim, to climb the hills and play all sorts of games together." And on education: "Let it be as liberal, as all-embracing and as long-continued as you can afford to make it. For the very reason that a girl's probable future will be that of wife and mother, we plead for a long home and school life for both boys and girls. Without comment let boys and girls follow their own interests in the toys they play with and the hobbies they pursue."

The 1899 annual meeting was held in the Auckland City Council Chamber. The use of the mayoral chair was forbidden so it was removed to an anteroom and used as a rack for hats and coats!

Canterbury women present included Mrs Wells, Mrs Fletcher, Miss Sievwright (Progressive Liberal Association), Miss Garstin (Australasian Society for Social Ethics), Mrs Blake (Canterbury Women's Institutes).

A report was made from the C.W.I. on work being done for a "Young Person's Protection Bill". The need for a union of domestic servants was added to the increasing list of concerns.

In 1900 the meeting was in Dunedin. An editorial in the *Lyttelton Times* complained that thirty-eight remits presented too much diversity. In the discussion on economic independence for married women one delegate, referring to the marriage service where the groom proclaims "with all my worldly goods I thee endow," remarked "this is twice as much as we ask for"! Miss Sherriff Bain again read a paper entitled "Peace and Arbitration". The sentiments expressed in the discussion which followed caused a storm of protest. Christchurch delegates were labelled as pro-Boer but Mrs Sheppard was re-elected as President and Miss Henderson as Secretary.

The 1901 meeting was held in Wanganui. The public addresses were attended with enthusiasm and dealt with the usual requests for reform. Approval was given to the establishment of an International Court of Justice. The first reference was made to representation on the International Council of Women, with which New Zealand had affiliated in 1900. New topics of investigation were proposed in papers entitled "Food Reform" and "Revenue and the Liquor Traffic". Mrs Sheppard and Mrs Wells were elected to the Executive and Miss Henderson as Secretary.

The eighth session was held in Napier in 1902. Some of the

resolutions carried were: "That in all cases where men and women are engaged in the same work, either in the employment of the Government, or of private individuals, equal wages should be paid for equal work." "That the recognition of legal independence of married women is desirable for the attainment of justice and for the furtherance of their marriage relationships." "That the time has come when all disabilities, which at present hinder women from sitting as members in either of the Houses of the Legislature, or from being elected or appointed to any Public Office in this Colony, should be removed, and that with regard to all powers, rights and duties of citizens, absolute equality should be the law of the land."

Mrs Wells, Mrs Care, Mrs Sheppard and Misses Henderson, Mackay and Roberts attended from Christchurch.

In her address at the 1903 meeting at New Plymouth the President asked, "Why should every other service to the community be recognised as of money value save that of wife and mother? The oversight is simply a relic of slavery and an example of it." The *Daily News* published an address on "State Children" by Miss Henderson. There was an enlightened resolution to remove the disabilities of illegitimacy. Titles of other addresses were, "The Influence of Women in Education", "The Hygiene of School Life", "The Rights of Children and the Drink Traffic", and "Equal Pay for Women Teachers".

No records have been found of the 1904 meeting in Nelson and no further transactions were published. In 1906 the first National Council of Women went into recess.

The delegates to these annual conferences were all women with ideas well in advance of their time, who as members of organizations formed to obtain women's franchise, must have been rather discouraged by the very limited impact made by the exercise of this right. The societies to which they belonged, their main purpose having been achieved, gradually ceased to function.

The First World War accentuated the disabilities suffered by women, many of whom found themselves able to do jobs hitherto regarded as possible only for men. It also became clear that many more women and girls would have to support themselves in the future and needed to be better equipped to do so.

In 1916 three Christchurch delegates to the first Council, Mrs Sheppard, Miss Henderson and Miss Mackay, decided that there was a renewed need for a Women's Council. To this end they sent letters to women throughout New Zealand, a provisional com-



mittee was formed, and eventually Councils were established in the four main centres. From the minutes of the first meeting of the Christchurch Women's Council, in September 1917: "The Mayoress (Mrs Holland) in the chair and Mrs Tomlinson acting as Secretary; Miss Henderson, Mrs P. Kaye, Mrs J. H. Wilson, Miss J. Roberts and Miss Cardale. By a unanimous decision a Women's Council was formed with the hope that it would give greater strength and a feeling of unity to existing women's groups."

In 1918-9 the new Women's Council was formed as separate branches in the main centres, each branch consisting of representatives from affiliated organisations.

By 1919 the Christchurch Women's Council had seven affiliated societies: the W.C.T.U., the Y.W.C.A., the Women Teachers' Association, the Canterbury Women's Institute, the Society for the Protection of Women and Children, the Christchurch Social Hygiene Society, the Salvation Army, and one associate-member. Today there are fifty-three affiliations and forty-five associate-members.

Presidents from 1917 to 1976 have been: Mrs K. Sheppard, Miss C. Henderson, Mrs A. E. Fraer, Miss I. M. Jamieson, Miss H. K. Lovell-Smith, Mrs W. G. Roberts, Miss Mildred Trent, Miss M. G. Havelaar, Mrs C. W. Barrell, Miss Mary McLean, Mrs G. W. Fairweather, Mrs Doreen Grant, Dr Margaret Smith and Mrs F. Cameron.

It is a happy coincidence that the first woman elected to the New Zealand Parliament, Mrs E. McCombs, was a member of the branch which passed as its first resolution in 1918 a request that the law making women ineligible for Parliament be amended. The Council has always urged the appointment of women to boards and committees and has encouraged women to qualify themselves to accept such responsibility.

At the 1921 conference a suggestion from Christchurch that a paid organiser be found to establish branches throughout New Zealand did not receive much support. At this time the number of branches totalled six. Each delegate was presented with a copy of a proposed Children's Charter.

In 1923 special attention was given to the economic position of women. Mrs Taylor read a paper entitled "Motherhood Endowment". A suggestion that the conference be confined to the National Committee was not accepted. There was protest from Christchurch about the way in which an application for the position of Vice-



Principal of the Wellington Training College by Miss Hetherington had been treated.

At the 1925 conference it was agreed that the National Executive consist of elected officers and branch presidents. A fund was established to help with expenses of delegates to an international conference. It was urged that a New Zealand woman be accredited to the League of Nations.

The number of branches has grown with the years: 1919-29 eight, 1930-9 twelve, 1940-9 seventeen, 1950-9 twenty-eight, 1960-9 thirty-two, 1970-6 thirty-five.

This increase has meant more work for the National Executive and has brought about changes. In 1942 presidents of nationally organised societies affiliated to the Council were included as members of the National Executive. At the biennial conference a Board of Management, consisting of officers and two committee-members, is elected. The Board of Management is responsible for carrying out policy decisions of the Conference and the National Executive and for the administration of the Council. It meets frequently throughout the year. The National Executive meets annually and consists of the Board of Management, branch presidents, conveners of national standing committees and the presidents of nationally organised societies affiliated to the branch. One of its main responsibilities is financial policy.

In 1970 Standing Committees were established, the conveners of which are elected at the Conference and are members of the National Executive. The members are appointed by the conveners. Nominations for membership are forwarded from branches. Members can express their individual opinion on any matter under discussion. The Standing Committees study legislation in their fields, suggest possible action and prepare lines of submissions to various Parliamentary Committees and Commissions.

This national administration, carrying out the policy decisions of thirty-five branches and thirty-four affiliated nationally-organised societies, was achieved by starting at the local level with the formation of branches and the enthusiasm and hard work of the individual branches is still the real strength of the Council. The work of a branch is both national, by means of remits, and local, by requests and deputations to Members of Parliament, Boards and Councils.

In the early days the Christchurch branch operated by forming subcommittees to deal with various issues. This worked well and still does when needed, but in 1938, because of the increasing

legislation in all types of social welfare, more-or-less permanent subcommittees were set up to deal with education, health and social welfare. These committees have since been increased to include home economics, immigration, legislation, mass media, physical environment, and the status of women.

All representatives are asked to join at least one committee. On any issue, requests or remits must first be presented to the Executive and if approved they go to the branch for representatives to put before their organisations. A final decision is made by a majority vote. If the matter is of local concern it can be dealt with immediately, but if it is a national issue the remit must be forwarded to the Board of Management for consideration. If it is accepted it is circulated to all the branches and a final vote is taken either at the annual National Executive meeting or at the Conference; at the first the branch president, and at the second the branch delegation, vote as directed by the branch. This makes decisions on national questions slow but means that issues are brought to the attention of and debated by a very large number of women.

In 1917, of the seven societies affiliated to the Christchurch Branch, the Canterbury Women's Institute, the W.C.T.U., and the Salvation Army had joined the original National Council. In 1922 the Canterbury Women's Institute went into recess. However, by the end of the 1920s the remaining six had been joined by the Mothers' Union, the Social Welfare Guild, the Kindergarten and Creche Association, the Girls' Friendly Society, the Mothers' Thought Guild, the Home Service Association, and the Federation of University Women. Some of these organisations no longer exist, some have changed their structure or name, but most are still affiliated at national and local level.

The years between 1930 and 1950, in which affiliations increased from fifteen to fifty, covered two periods of great disruption to family and community life—the Depression and the Second World War. Both made women acutely aware of their legal and financial insecurity and their low earning power. The years between the Depression and the War saw considerable and far-reaching legislation, and it was necessary to make every effort to ensure that the position of women and children was improved.

Additional affiliations at this time included such national societies as the Howard Penal Reform League, the Country Women's Institutes, the Family Planning Association, the Business and Professional Women's Club, the Women's Division of

Federated Farmers, the League of Mothers, Townswomen's Guilds, the Pan Pacific and South-East Asian Women's Association, and women's groups from the different churches. As well there were affiliations from local welfare and women's service groups such as the Nurse Maude Association, the Friends of St Helen's Hospital, the Glenelg Health Camp Committee, the Nurses' Christian Fellowship, Toc H Women's Section, the Y.W.C.A., Women's Auxiliary, and on the outbreak of World War II the Air Force Association Women's Section, the R.S.A. Women's Section, and the Navy League. Later the Friends of the Hospital, a group initiated by the Council to alleviate the shortage of hospital household staff, joined the branch. These groups retained their membership until such time as their objectives had been obtained or the purpose of their organisation had changed.

In 1952 the number of affiliated societies had reached sixty. Since then there have been some resignations, and some new affiliations from the Save the Children Fund Committee, the Canterbury Housewives' Union, the Soroptimists' Club, the Intellectually Handicapped Children's Society, the Medical Women's Association, the Parents' Centre, and the North Canterbury Post and Telegraph Women's Association.

By the 1960s the women's section of the Riccarton branch of the Labour Party joined; the Christchurch women's section of the National Party and the women's section of the Citizens' Association had been members for some time. The affiliation of the Maori Women's Welfare League was a valuable addition to the branch and it is greatly regretted that this lasted for only a few years. Other new members were the Playcentre Association, the Electrical Association for Women in N.Z., the Disturbed Children's Aid Movement, and the Prisoners' Aid and Rehabilitation Society. It was with much regret that the resignation of the W.C.T.U.—a foundation member of the Council—was received.

New membership in the 1970s has reflected a renewed fight for the equality of women, with the affiliation of the Society for Research on Women, the National Organisation for Women, the Women's Liberation Movement, Centrepoint, and the Women's Civic Association. Other new members include the Arthritis Society, Solo Parents, the Abortion Law Reform Society, and the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, also the service clubs, Altrusa and Zonta.

In 1973 the branch decided to hold an annual function to commemorate the Christchurch founders of the National Council



of Women, to be held in September as near as possible to the date on which women were granted the franchise, and at which a speaker of note would be invited to give an address. It was to be called the H. K. Lovell-Smith Function, after Miss Hilda Lovell-Smith, a life member, who had served as President and Secretary both at branch and national level and had been one of the many women who had given a lifetime of service to the Council.

In the sixty years of the existence of the Christchurch branch so much work has been done by so many women that a full account is quite impossible. The branch has contributed fully to the various national requests and submissions, which has meant considerable work for the Executive Committee and the sub-committees. Subjects include:— the appointment of Women Justices of the Peace, the inclusion of women in the Police Force, suppression of publication of divorce court proceedings, the provision of children's courts of law, the registration of day nurseries and homes for the aged, jury service for women, the establishment of the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women, the adoption of the principle of Equal Pay for women. Among the many submissions made in recent years are those to:— the Royal Commission of Social Security, the Commission of Inquiry into Equal Pay, the Commission of Inquiry into Housing, the Inquiry into Urban Transport, the Inquiry into Pre-school Education, the Select Committee for Compensation for Personal Injury, the Select Committee on Women's Rights.

Among the many activities in which the Christchurch Branch has taken part or has initiated locally, space permits the mention of but a few. Some are of permanent value and some met the needs of a particular time. They include: Special Schools for retardate children; a municipal rest-room for women; the Burwood Girls' Home; a School for Intellectually Handicapped Children; the appointment of a woman to the Prisons Board; the appointment of a woman Magistrate's-Assistant in the Children's Court; the establishment of a crematorium in Christchurch; broadcasts for children; representation on the Mayor's Unemployment Committee (1930s); establishment of a training Centre for women and girls, and a Women's Employment Centre; Open-Air Schools; food production and distribution; the building of pensioners' cottages by the City Council (part of the furnishings of the first twenty-four cottages was the gift of women's organisations through the N.C.W.); the formation of a Mental

Trust Committee which administrated for many years, on behalf of Mrs Tomlinson, the government-appointed official visitor to the mental hospital a trust funded by the Government, to provide comforts and outings for mental hospital patients; the Christchurch Welcome Club; the convening of a public meeting to form the Women's Volunteer Land Army; the formation of a Friends of the Hospital group; the convening of a Women's Rally in 1947 and a subsequent rally with emphasis on Peace in 1948; the formation, at the request of the City Council, of a Housing Committee to assist in finding accommodation for immigrants; representation on the Committee for After Care of Special Class Children; the organisation of the first N.C.W. Regional Conference; representation on CORSO; sponsorship of a child, through the Save the Children Fund; representation on the Canterbury Association for Mental Health and the Canterbury Mental Health Council; representation on the Consumer Association, the Medical Research Committee, the Town Hall Promotion Committee, the Christchurch Savings Committee, the Co-ordinative Council for the Handicapped, the Anti-Litter Campaign, the Christchurch Clean Air Society, the Save the Children Fund, and the Children's Film Festival Committee; the establishment of Friends at Court; representation on the Mayoress's Committee, the Women's Convention Committee, and the Aged People's Welfare Council. Recent matters of concern have been: the replacement of the *Rangatira* shipping service to Wellington; the need for special areas for the use of skate-boards; the need for public transport specially adapted for the use of the handicapped. A survey, still to be completed, into the needs of the elderly living in their own homes, was made in 1976-7.

The National Council of Women has been called a Women's Parliament. This is true in a limited sense. It is democratic and does reflect the majority opinion of its members. It provides opportunity for discussion and debate on issues which are controversial, and it brings together the views of its members on many matters of national importance. It communicates these views to the Government or to appropriate authorities; it cannot however make the final decisions but, acting as a pressure group, it can and does try to influence them.



## The Sportswomen

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IMAGINE, in her new-found freedom, the voluminous-skirted, tight-stayed woman of the 1890s bumping along on a bicycle—that heavy, hard, precarious road-machine. Horizons widened when the Atalanta Cycling Club, established for the ladies of Christchurch in 1892, departed from Latimer Square. Some members rode out clad in knickers over skirts, some in knickerbockers, but most were still in long skirts which could catch a pedal and throw the cyclist off her mount. Letters for and against knickerbockers for women appeared in the press. One young woman foresaw a life of spinsterhood if this male clothing was accepted: “Our sex will indeed lose its influence over the opposite one by this procedure,” she added.<sup>1</sup>

Alice Burn, who married in January 1894, obviously did not see the issue in the same light: “The bride and bridesmaids and most of those present were arrayed in handsome knicker suits,” said the *New Zealand Wheelman*.<sup>2</sup> Some of those present at the wedding attended the meeting held in May that year to form a Rational Dress Association, which aimed to make women’s clothing more suitable for an active life. This caused ripples of consternation and attracted some support, but when the *Christchurch Star* advised women on their tennis apparel it was as if the movement and its ideals had never existed: “A cross-over blouse for neatness, and a workman-like skirt—white serge or linen”, short enough to clear the ground and not too full, were suggested.<sup>3</sup>

In those days women cricketers wore a cream flannel gown, a gathered skirt, plus a cap and apron. Golfers were still wearing long skirts, though one was photographed in 1906 at the Orbell Cup contest wearing a divided skirt. Trousers were still too daring for most sportswomen, except some cyclists.

Although by 1897 Atlanta had died out, it had fulfilled its aim

and women then cycled on their own, in groups, and with men, both for recreation and as transport.

But was it expected that women would exercise? As early as 1884 the pupils of Christchurch Girls' High School were trained in gymnastics. With coats covering their navy-blue serge knickers and tunics, they crocodiled quickly across Cranmer Square to classes at the old Normal School. In 1892 the Dress and Athletics Section of the Hygiene Department of the Canterbury Women's Institute had tried unsuccessfully to form gymnastic classes at the Y.M.C.A. However, not one woman had gone to the inaugural meeting.

Dr Florence Keller of Chicago found it necessary in a 1901 address to Christchurch women to advise them to discard their "binding clothing and develop muscles".

In 1901 Education Boards were required to include the teaching of physical drill to all boys and girls over the age of eight. The 1877 Education Act had allowed for instruction and military drill for boys. Girls had not been included; they were taught sewing and needlework.

At the turn of the century young women, depending on their circumstances, could choose to play golf, hockey, tennis, croquet or cricket. A few could go mountaineering as their fathers or husbands did, some would swim, and a limited number would ride their horses in the show-ring. Golf, tennis, and horse-riding tended to be sports for the more well-to-do young women.

In 1872 Christchurch newspapers mentioned the formation of a golf club and in April of the following year play began in Hagley Park (where some wary ladies were distracted by the closeness of the grazing cattle). For a time the archery club developed alongside, some families being represented in both clubs.

The Shirley Golf Club began in 1900 with women paying ten shillings each for separate membership. This put golf out of reach of many. (Women and girls in the trades were earning up to five shillings a week, and of course only a small percentage were employed.) Soon negotiations began between the men's and women's clubs towards amalgamation, which took place in 1903.

The men's Golf Association organised Women's Championships until 1905, when women players decided that Auckland, Napier, Manawatu, Wanganui, Wairarapa, Hutt-Wellington, Christchurch, Timaru, North Otago, and Otago clubs should affiliate with the British Women's Golf Union. Further autonomy came in 1910

when a meeting in Christchurch decided to form the New Zealand Ladies' Golf Union.

The young ladies of the early 1900s did have some opportunities to play hockey, however. If they had attended the Kaiapoi Borough School they may have belonged to the Kaiapoi Kiwi Girls' Hockey Club, which had been begun for pupils in 1897 by J. Harold Evans. It was the first club of its type in the Colony. In the same year the Hinemoa team, the first for women, was organised also in Kaiapoi.

There was a feeling at this time that hockey was the best girls' game in schools. "Since more attention is to be given by the Education Department to outdoor exercises for girls, probably hockey will be the game chosen," said a Christchurch paper.<sup>5</sup>

After some difficulty in obtaining fields at Hagley, hockey soon made rapid headway. The Christchurch Hockey Club played in the South Island tournament at Sydenham Park in 1904, defeating Dunedin and Palmerston North. Addington also played. (It is interesting to note that the umpire wore his bowler hat throughout the game.) The girls' uniform was a navy-blue serge dress with a starched Eton collar, a pale blue Tam-O'Shanter with a white pompom (Did those berets stay on during play?), a badge and a shield with the letters C.H.C. embroidered in Gothic capitals. Quick stick-work and positional play overcame the drawbacks of this Victorian garb.

The Christchurch Hockey Club, which functioned between 1900 and 1907, had a field on Sir Heaton Rhodes's property, Elmwood. It played teams from Dunsandel, Ellesmere and Sydenham, and travelled on alternate years to Dunedin and Wellington. Mrs Emily Miles, née Nightingale, an early player, recalls that the club played at Doyleston and Dunsandel and other Canterbury centres going by train as far as possible and then by farm cart. (A match was an all-day undertaking then.) The social side of team life was most important. Mrs Miles described how the High School Old Girls' team travelled to Banks Peninsula in 1910 to play and to give a concert tour; part of the entertainment was a song about the players written by the girls, who, it is remembered, had "behaved like ladies". However it was not considered suitable for a woman to continue playing the game after marriage.

In April 1908 at a meeting called to consider forming a Women's Hockey Association, a committee was elected to draw up rules. Twenty-seven clubs joined, with thirty-two teams playing in competition matches. Men played in the women's teams except



in competitions. The indignation which greeted a proposal to join the men's association in 1909 demonstrates that women's groups were confident of their own administrative ability. Though some men took part in administration at club level it was not until 1975 that men were permitted to sit on the Canterbury Executive.

Banks Peninsula, Ellesmere, Ashburton, North Canterbury, and Malvern were sub-associations—some now have their own hockey associations.

In 1914 the hardy Canterbury girls met at 7 a.m. at Hagley Park and practised in earnest for their match against a touring English side. The game was a curtain-raiser to a football match, and Mrs Miles remembers a fit but not very skilled team defeating England 3-2. Two of the Canterbury girls, Miss Myrtle Pearce and Miss Sybil Kruse, were chosen for the first New Zealand team to meet England. Extracts from the newspaper reports show the game to have been lively and full of action: "No holding the sprightly little damsel that constituted the New Zealand right"; "The slender Miss Neilson got possession with flying legs and skirts centred at a good angle but missed her forward line"; "England were very much awake to their peril. They were up against greyhounds."

Girls in Canterbury secondary schools have for many years had the opportunity to play hockey. In 1913 a High Schools representative team was chosen to play against the Canterbury representative team. During the early years there was also a competition for primary school teams but this lapsed around 1920, and although efforts were made to restart it they were not successful until after World War II.

Women's participation was accepted and indeed expected in tennis and croquet—two games which began, in New Zealand, as social occasions on the wide lawns of spacious homesteads.

In 1881 a few enthusiastic tennis players had approached the Church Property Trustees and had been able to secure a section on the corner of Chester Street and Cranmer Square on which two asphalt courts were laid down. It was for some years the only club in Christchurch and for a long time remained the leading one though the Lancaster Park Club soon became important.

Early players picked up the game and played it in their own way—there was no recognised style nor were courts standardised. Indeed, players made up local rules. At the Armagh Street courts the ball could be played off a six-foot back-board because there

was only two feet of run back. Another Christchurch rule was the method of handicapping by bisques—a point that could be taken at any time in a game. Each player was given a set number of bisques per match. The results of this were not good. According to a *Press* reporter “players came off the courts nervous wrecks through the strain of deciding when to take their bisques”.<sup>7</sup>

By 1886 Canterbury had eight clubs scattered in and around Christchurch, justifying the title “the cradle of tennis” given in *A History of Canterbury*.<sup>8</sup>

The year that the Christchurch Lawn Tennis Club was formed was also the year in which soft rubber balls were replaced by felt-covered ones. Four years later, in 1885, came the forerunner of today’s ball, which led to a higher standard of play.

When a tennis club was formed in 1889 at Lancaster Park, there were thirty men and twenty women members but the committee was entirely male. A fee of five shillings in 1908 enabled a woman to compete at inter-club games and tournaments, or simply to use the courts for enjoyment. Women rarely played against men but occasionally teamed up for mixed doubles in a representative match.

Tennis for women was included in the intercollegiate competition and Miss Cora Wilding, playing for Canterbury University College, and complete with long skirt, high-necked blouse and straw-boater, helped her team to a convincing victory over Victoria University College.

While tennis clubs boomed, private tennis parties were still social occasions and the society pages of the newspapers often referred to tennis afternoons being held at the homes of notable citizens.

In Andersen’s book, *Old Christchurch*, there appears a photograph of five women playing croquet in Dr Barker’s garden, and the author comments, “Despite the hardships of colonial life, settlers were determined to preserve the polite conventions of their day.”

And so croquet came to Christchurch and Canterbury—for both sexes—and spread from there throughout the country.

In the 1890s women played at the Murray-Aynsleys’ at Sumner, and at Rangiora, Temuka, and Timaru. Although the game flourished in the early 1900s, with the names of Mrs J. W. Hill and Miss L. Rutherford being prominent, it was not until 1920 that a National Council was formed.

Horse-riding as a means of transport had for generations



included women but acceptance of women as competitors in A. and P. Shows was a slow process. In 1871 Mrs Deans had ridden her mare Jenny in an otherwise male-dominated Canterbury Show. Some years later the Show Catalogue described "Boy's Pony, Mare or Gelding, not above 13 hands and thoroughly quiet to ride, to be shown in the saddle, as it will have to be ridden by a boy or girl". There were two feminine entries that year—Miss Seabright and Miss M. Campbell. In a wire-jumping competition in 1891 Miss Isabel Britton rode Star, competing against twelve men. This was the first mention of a name that was to re-appear in Canterbury Show Catalogues for several years. However, entries from women remained in the minority until after the First World War.

The Christchurch Amateur, East Christchurch, St Albans, Sydenham, and Richmond Swimming Clubs were all functioning by 1893. The earliest, the Christchurch Amateur, was also the first to admit women. Arthur Francis trained nineteen women swimmers in 1884.

In the 1891-92 season pupils from Girls' High School took part in school swimming races. Once again Mr Francis was the instructor. The interest taken in swimming at this time is shown by the sixty-two entries received by the Christchurch Amateur Swimming Club for the Ladies' Bracelet during the same season.

The first championship event for women (the one hundred yards) was held in 1912 when the New Zealand Championships were held in Christchurch. Before the 1914-18 war there was little for women in competition events, but the visits of the Australian swimmers Annette Kellerman and Fanny Durack helped to change this, and after the war the tour of the American Ethelda Bleibtry heightened women's interest.

The costume for swimmers was recorded in regulations printed in the 1893-4 *Annual*: White, light transparent, flesh colour, or network swimsuits were banned. Drawers were to be worn under the costume which was to cover the wearer from the neck to the knees and the elbows. Gala competitors were requested to "move cloaked from marquee to the staging". Both men and women competitors were required to comply with these regulations but by 1913 sleeves became optional.

The games for young women mentioned so far are competitive—one person or team against another person or team—but there has always been in men and women a spirit of adventure, a willingness to accept the challenge of the world around them.

New Zealand's explorers may all have been men, but some, at least, of our early mountaineers were women (and feminine enough to do their fancywork at base camp, as Mrs Malcolm Ross is recorded to have done). Mrs Leonard Harper—Bishop Harper's daughter-in-law—was the first woman to visit the Mount Cook region; this she did in 1872, climbing the terminal face of the Tasman moraine and on to the Mueller Glacier.

The first ascent of the Hochstetter Dome was made by Mrs Van Lendenfeld who helped her husband with survey work. It took her twenty-seven hours, with one and three-quarter hours' rest—not surprising when one considers the clothing: long skirt, bonnet (surely not stays?), and the gear carried. When Mrs Malcolm Ross went up the Tasman Glacier with her husband their load included a pistol, ammunition, an opossum rug, three sleeping-bags, and twenty-five pounds of biscuits. These women displayed tremendous stamina, defying all currently held convictions that women were "delicate by nature". It was about this time that Mount Rosa was first climbed by Miss Rosa Moorhouse, Miss Kinsey and Miss Mabel Studholme.

Mention should be made of the Australian woman, Freda du Faur, who was the Emily Pankhurst of mountaineering in the Southern Alps. She climbed between 1908 and 1913, on her own with no chaperone (unheard of previously), only a guide: Peter Graham. From the Hermitage she set off on her first climb—Mount Sealy—with the fear that she would lose her reputation among the guests she left behind: "One old lady implored me with tears in her eyes not to spoil my life for so small a thing as climbing a mountain."<sup>9</sup> Freda retorted that if her reputation was "so fragile a thing that it would not bear such a test then [she] would be very well rid of a useless article". She made twenty-three climbs in three seasons, becoming the first to ascend Dampier, the first to make the Grand Traverse of Mount Cook, and the first to traverse Mount Sefton. On one of her climbs Miss Mary Murray-Aynsley accompanied her to the foot of Copland Pass. (On the summit of Mount Tasman, Freda lost her hat and had to improvise with her veil.) No woman has done more to establish the rights of women in the mountains.

The beginnings of women's cricket in Canterbury do not go back as far as those of golf, tennis, and croquet. The only cricket a girl in 1900 could have played would have been with her brothers. Ladies' cricket was in its infancy when Canterbury women met Wellington at Hagley Park in 1910. The reporter, a

man, noted that the match was "a decided novelty. With a few exceptions the fair combatants proved only to be in the novice stage, but what they lacked, in their white frocks, and with radiant countenances, made up a charming picture. The play was delightfully unorthodox. Miss C. Scott exhibited defence that would have put many a man to shame. Miss Wilson was a fair example of the other extreme and scored off nearly every ball she got—quite evident that she had been studying the style of her brother 'Baby' Wilson of the St Albans First Eleven. Among the ladies who gave unmistakable evidence of having had considerable practice at the game were Misses A. and I. Scott and Miss Curlett. The Wellington bowling was mostly underhand. Only one lady bowled overarm. The principle of 'feet together' was altered to 'skirts taut' and the ball had little chance of getting past."<sup>10</sup> Canterbury scored well and dismissed Wellington easily but the result was a draw because of rain.

Incidentally, all the players were described as Miss So-and-So, for this also was a game for the single woman.

No other women's cricket was reported in the Christchurch or Lyttelton papers until 1931. What happened in the intervening years can be only surmised. There was obviously little chance for a woman in the early 1900s to play competitive cricket: her choice lay among croquet, tennis or golf, though she may have been one of the few to adopt show-riding or swimming.

The choice gradually widened after 1920, until women had before them all the sports options of today. Athletics was a new activity. Women first began to appear in Canterbury athletics meetings in the mid-1920s. The Christchurch Technical Amateur Athletics and Cross Country Club decided to accept women members in 1928. The uniform—black shorts and white blouse—was considered too scanty for the playing-field. At a business-girls' sports meeting held about 1931 the young women wore an apron front and back, which they rolled up when competing, giving the appearance of romper shorts, as they were not permitted to wear shorts. Another setback came in 1930 with the rumour that running caused varicose veins, and there were several resignations.

By 1932 the Canterbury Amateur Athletic Club began to face the fact that women were seriously interested in athletics, but postponed discussing the matter until 1933 when a Ladies' Club was formed. Miss K. Martyn was the first Canterbury woman to win a New Zealand title. She won the one hundred yards in 1929.



However, it was not until 1939 that women were admitted to more events in the New Zealand championships. In fact, women have never been able to compete in as many events as men. The women's New Zealand mile was contested first in 1960 and the four hundred metres hurdles in 1976.

Organised competition for women athletes has been limited. This makes Valerie Young (née Sloper) all the more outstanding. Along with Marise Chamberlain, in the early 1950s, she was coached by Val Briedis, whose methods which included weight training, were thought by some to be too tough (and had provoked tears). He also made the girls train at night (by torchlight) and in the winter. Newspaper headlines such as "COACH APPLIES RUSSIAN METHODS ON WOMEN ATHLETES—NOT FEMININE"<sup>11</sup> reflected popular opinion; however, his ideas produced results and many of his athletes did extremely well. Valerie Young has won more national titles—twenty-eight in all—than any other New Zealander, man or woman.

Basketball was played in Timaru in 1914 and there were enough clubs to form an association in Christchurch by 1921. Courts, until 1946, were grass and some players wore fishermen's nets over their shoes to prevent slipping. The game grew rapidly in Canterbury and by 1935 the Canterbury Basketball Association became the first to have a hundred teams, and then two hundred and fifty teams (with at least 2250 girls involved). This game (now known as netball) has always been played by women and run by women; although there are men referees, there has never been a man on the executive.

Perhaps basketball's early appeal lay in its all-embracing character. It was a game played for enjoyment by many working women and schoolgirls, whether they achieved any great degree of prowess at the game or not. Probably the only training was that done by goalies in their backyards, and by walking over the hills at weekends, which was a popular outing then. The simple uniform, (usually the school gym slip and sandshoes) was a factor in its favour in the hard times of the 'twenties and 'thirties. Thus basketball introduced another section of the feminine community, the working class girl, to participation in sports activity.

The New Zealand Alpine Club had only one woman member in 1893, and three women subscribers to its journal. By 1934 there were sixteen women members, and articles by women climbers were being published; today women have almost as many articles published as men. However, it was 1977 before the Canterbury

Mountaineering Club admitted women to membership. The club may have left it too late to gain allegiance of at least this generation's experienced women climbers. In 1953 the first all-women party (made up of Mavis Davidson, Sheila MacMurray and Doreen Pickers) climbed Mount Cook. The most recent woman climber of note was Jill Tremain who, with Graeme Dingle, traversed the Southern Alps from Fiordland to Cook Strait in winter.

Men began to ski at Arthur's Pass in 1927 and it was not long before women in skirts and cloche hats followed them.

What of women's part in those well-established sports—golf, tennis, and croquet—after 1920?

World War I had created new responsibilities and opportunities for women in sport as in much else. As so many men were at the Front, women had to share in club administration, and even in the upkeep of the golf courses. G. M. Kelly says in *Golf in New Zealand* that women's influence on club maintenance was "a hot potato" but that extended playing rights were sometimes grudgingly conceded"; because they kept the greens tidy, the women were allowed to play more frequently.

Before World War I there were fewer than a hundred and fifty women golfing members in Christchurch—a token of the numbers in the 1920s. During World War II there was again a decline in female membership. Post-war recovery was slow, but the maternity hospitals were busy. It was not until 1953 that the number of women members of golf clubs reached pre-war totals and by the 1960s women were again fully represented. In 1977 there were over 2700 club members of thirty-five women's golf clubs in Canterbury.

Women golfers seldom play against men. There may be mixed matches once or twice a year. For the larger part of this century women have played on the courses during the week and men at the weekend. But as more and more women take paid employment, friction can develop, and men often show resentment of women filling courses at the weekend.

The greatest change in tennis came after the First World War. In the 1930 decade tennis was at its peak. A group of about ten girls brought fame to Canterbury tennis. Most of these players were close to winning national titles from a very strong field, and several did take titles. This group was probably inspired by the successes of the first Canterbury woman to win the national singles title—May Spiers, who won in 1923-4, 1925-6 and 1927-8. The



title was again won for Canterbury in 1930-1 by Mrs H. M. Dykes, one of the first of Canterbury's women tennis players to play at the net. Miss Spiers and Miss Melva Wake won the Ladies' Championship Doubles in 1927-8 and Miss Wake and Miss May Anderson maintained Canterbury's reputation by capturing the same title in 1929-30. Both Miss Spiers and Miss Andrew featured as winners of the Mixed Doubles Championships. It was said of Miss Spiers that "her ground strokes were very good and her service and volley were really as strong as a man's".<sup>12</sup>

The heyday of Canterbury women's tennis came with the winning of the Nunneley Casket for five consecutive years. Of the players, Irene and Thelma Poole were the most famous. They won the New Zealand doubles in 1936-7 and in 1938-9. Said one commentator: "The great thing about them was their speed about the court. Thelma in particular was very quick and was a superb volleyer."<sup>13</sup> According to Thelma, enjoyment was the keynote of a tournament on the New Zealand circuit (something many feel is lacking in the competitive atmosphere of today). The Poole sisters were selected to represent New Zealand in Australia, and were the only team to be sent abroad in the '30s. In the late 1930s they introduced the short dress (mid-thigh) to the New Zealand scene.

Until the 1934-5 season women played only in mid-week competitions. No doubt it was the excellence of the Poole sisters which brought women into inter-club, senior, mixed, Saturday competitions. However, senior women's Saturday competitions were not introduced until 1942-3.

The male attitude towards women tennis players has varied: there has been encouragement—Mr Felton at a pre-war meeting at the Elmwood Club suggested Saturday tennis competition for women—but other senior men have not wanted to play with women. There is no mixed doubles in the highest grade in Canterbury—let alone a competition in which men and women can play against one another.

The high standard of women's play in Canterbury was again evident in the Nunneley Casket wins of 1945-6, 1951-2, the New Zealand singles win in 1961-2, and the Rothmans Teams Trophy (previously the Nunneley Casket) in 1973-7.

Of the second period of croquet history, after 1920, Mrs Ida Kirk, New Zealand councillor for twenty-four years and the 1976 Vice-President of Canterbury, recalls that when she began playing croquet in 1928 there were 4000 to 5000 woman croquet players

and 250 men. The predominance of women has remained, although today younger players of both sexes are joining.

Mindful of the defeat by the Canterbury side in 1914, the English hockey team turned the tables when they defeated Canterbury 6-1 in 1938. The new serge gym-frocks, long black stockings and long-sleeved red blouses worn by the Canterbury players allowed more freedom of movement. Later knee-length socks replaced the stockings and it was not until the late 1960s that cumbersome gym-frocks gave way to pleated black skirts.

As more competitive sports emerged, attendance figures at hockey matches dwindled, as did newspaper columns devoted to hockey. The crowd of 4000 to 5000 that witnessed the Canterbury-England match in 1938 has not been approached since.

The lack of interest shown in hockey throughout the years by the city fathers is demonstrated in "the pavilion affair". The need for shelter of some kind on the hockey grounds was first suggested in 1912 when an appeal was made to the Domain Board to build a shelter at North Hagley Park. On numerous occasions permission was sought to build a pavilion but it was not until 1951 that this was granted and the pavilion was erected at Hospital Corner where most of the women's fields are situated.

Until the formation of the Canterbury Umpires Association in 1940 all matches were controlled by men. The number of clubs and teams has grown steadily over the years, but only two of the clubs which were present at the inaugural meeting in 1908 are still active: Hinemoa and Digbys.

In 1931 several girls who played hockey in winter banded together for summer cricket. A Canterbury association was formed and in the first year ten teams (many members from the Business Women's Club) entered the competition. An opening season report indicates that men were wary of women's part in this "gentlemen's game": "The muscular maidens began to smite the boundary, to the infinite danger of the spectators gathered on the white line, and the season had opened."<sup>14</sup>

It was not until 1935, when the English women's team toured New Zealand, that Canterbury men accepted women cricketers. The English girls were superior to the Canterbury players in skill and showed that women could play cricket to a good standard. Thereafter, fathers and friends of players prided themselves in giving useful coaching tips to the women and were prepared to act as umpires. The women were able to pit their skills against

the men in annual matches against Blue Star Taxis and the Veterans' Association.

Save for the length of the skirt and the materials used, dress for cricketers has shown little change over the years. The divided-skirt was in vogue in the 1930s, but a young woman was not to be seen away from the cricket field in her knee-length cricket skirt: an additional skirt of acceptable length was worn over the top when travelling to and from matches.

New Zealand's most outstanding woman cricketer is Phyl Blackler, who has an incredible record both as participant and administrator. Her introduction to cricket came by joining in the men's practices at Sydenham Park, and it was generally conceded that in her heyday she could have held her own with her men counterparts. In 1938 at the age of seventeen she toured New South Wales with the New Zealand team and was a regular member of the national side until 1966. She was probably the country's fastest woman bowler and as her pace slackened she turned to leg spin with no less success. With her bowling skills went an aggressive bat and sharp fielding ability. Her twelve test appearances, in which she made 371 runs and captured eighteen wickets, make her New Zealand's most-capped woman cricketer.

While team sports became increasingly popular, women who preferred individual activity began to take up swimming both for recreation and in competition. But, because it was frowned upon for married women to swim competitively, many swam under assumed names. From 1920 until the present day Canterbury women swimmers have a better record than men in international competition. The first truly international swimmer was Gwitha Shand, who learned to swim at Sumner aided by a self-made lifebelt composed of old pieces of cork. Rated a strong contender for a medal in the 440 yards at the 1924 Paris Olympics, she was prevented by illness from completing the distance in the final.

In 1921 the New Zealand Swimming Association recognised the need to foster swimming throughout the country and Miss Shand, with the New Zealand diving champion Kathleen Bristed from Christchurch, toured the North Island giving demonstrations and holding coaching classes. Miss Shand's greatest achievement was the world record she set in the 440 yards freestyle in 1922 with a time of 6 minutes 26.4 seconds. Later that year in Honolulu she lowered the record again, and in 1923 at the Australian championships reduced it further to 6 minutes 9.2 seconds. She was hailed as the greatest woman distance swimmer the world had seen.



These efforts established the prestige of women's swimming in New Zealand and inspired many girls to enter competition.

Swimming has made significant progress since the days when Miss Shand competed (often in icy-cold water) in the outdoor pools. Since her time, Canterbury has produced such notable women swimmers as Tui Shipston, Cathy Whiting, Jaynie Parkhouse, Susan Hunter, and Lynne Rowe, whose collective performances, while outstanding, do not rival the brilliance of Miss Shand.

Until World War I women had been excluded from surf-life-saving. While the men were at the war, women undertook beach duty and although antagonism towards women as beach patrollers was strong after the war, gradually women's participation was accepted and now every club has a women's team. However, women made their first overseas trip only in 1974 when the first nationally selected women's team went to Sri Lanka on an educational and competitive tour. Three members of that team came from Canterbury.

While the younger women were entering sports once thought to be for men only, the older women were attempting to break down barriers by entering bowling clubs. As early as 1899 the Canterbury Bowling Green included playing lady members, but no further reference to women players can be found until the 1930s. It appeared that women frequently opened the bowling season by placing the kitty, but having performed this onerous task they were then relegated to the role of spectators or caterers for the men at tournaments. The Beckenham Club was the first club that allowed women to play. Their women members were invited to play on the greens as guests of the men members in 1931, and interested women decided at a meeting two years later to write to the other men's clubs requesting that they open their greens to women. The initial opposition from some men was eventually overcome. Some fifty-seven clubs were in 1976 affiliated to the Canterbury Association, with approximately 2000 women players from Waiau to Rakaiā.

Bowling attire has remained conservative, with the allowable length of white dresses no shorter than sixteen inches from the ground, with shoes worn. The North Island association attempted to introduce trousers but this was met with sharp disapproval from the South Island players.

How elegant the ladies once looked in their divided-skirts, Holland suits, Norfolk jackets and flat hats, as they rode side-saddle



on their upstanding mounts. But there was at least one young woman who found even in the 1920s that wearing men's britches was more comfortable. She claimed they gave her more grip and greater control of the horse. Jodphurs introduced in the early 1930s suited her style of riding.

Mrs Helen Macfarland, a well-known horsewoman in Canterbury, reminiscing on changes she had seen over the years, said it was not uncommon in the 1920s and 30s for women to ride up to twenty miles each way to show a horse. She commented that showing horses was once a sport but is now more of a business. A strong competitive element has crept into it. However, one small pony club in Ashburton preserves some flavour of the past by teaching side-saddle riding.

A few sporting activities—such as netball and competitive marching—are the sole preserve of women; most others—hockey and softball, for instance—are freely enjoyed by both sexes. However, there remain several towards which society still adopts a restrictive attitude. The Canterbury Women's Jockey Association, for example, has had a hard battle to gain recognition since it was formed in 1975. Some people are opposed to the very idea of women riding against men, others see women as not having sufficient strength and not being able to take a fall as well as men—one or two even fear that women could endanger the safety of men jockeys. Is this discrimination so different from that which faced the young ladies of the early 1900s? Women now compete in cross-country and marathon races, but women runners complain that while out jogging they are often abused by men. Men soccer players look suspiciously upon the women's competition in Christchurch and are afraid it may debase their game. But women are now playing rugby football and regular games are held between the Linwood, Belfast and Amberley teams, many of the matches being played for charity.

Over the years, along with the significant modifications in dress, the attitude of serious competitors in most sports has changed, with heavier emphasis now being placed on winning. Training and coaching begin at a younger age—too early, some say—and methods have become more scientific and intensive. The relaxed, even casual, approach of earlier days is no longer in evidence. Perhaps this reflects the attitudes of contemporary life and suggests that sport is becoming less a means of recreation and more a branch of entertainment.

# Maori Women

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VERY little has been published on the Maori side of Canterbury history. Since this brief account has been gleaned from many conversations and printed oddments, it has gaps and perhaps errors which Maori readers in particular may notice. We ask them to see this as a challenge to venture further and deeper than we could go.

The *tangata whenua* of Canterbury are Ngai-tahu. Through all their vicissitudes since European contact began, alongside all the necessary changes in social and material life, they have held a firm thread of continuity from the ancient tradition and culture distinctive to the South Island.

Sex roles were well defined in the old Maori society. Men were normally the spokesmen and still are. This has never prevented a forceful woman or group of women from playing an effective part.

The daily work of women, in the domestic round of food, clothing and the care of children, involved one aspect that earned them particular respect: in the course of these humble activities they gave expression to culture and custom: the women carried the *matauranga*, the learning principle by which the children imbibed knowledge of their community. Women have often been composers and creators of new forms as well as teachers of the old. This is also true today.

In lineage and land rights there was no sex distinction. Women were skilled at arguing their own case based on their *whakapapa*, or line of descent. In 1911 a government commission examined the titles to Tuahiwi lands which had been subdivided fifty years earlier by Walter Buller. Kataraina Uru gave evidence: "My husband was one of the original grantees. My name was not in the grant. I am one of the women who attended the meeting with Mr Buller [when he] said grants should issue in favour of husbands and wives. When the grants came out they were in favour of

husbands only. We demanded from the Government inclusion in the titles, but were not included until a number were dead.”<sup>1</sup>

Buller conceded to those eloquent women that he had made a mistake; but it was not remedied—and not forgotten, either.

Land was the most burning question during the first thirty years of this century, centred on the campaign around the Ngai-tahu Claim. By Kemp’s Deed of 1848, all of Canterbury and Westland from the Ashley River to the Waitaki, excluding Banks Peninsula—some 21,343,000 acres—had been purchased for £2000 and vague promises of schools and churches. Reserves were supposed to be adequate, but within a year the Maoris (only forty of whom had signed the deed) were complaining that the land amounted to only ten acres apiece.<sup>2</sup>

It took just four years short of a century for a measure of justice to be done to the Ngai-tahu Claim, and that has never been regarded as sufficient. No opportunity was missed to deliver straight talk to influential quarters—as in 1905 when four thousand Maoris welcomed the Governor, Lord Plunket,<sup>3</sup> and in 1922 when the Hon. J. G. Coates opened the new Tuahiwi Hall.<sup>4</sup> At least one woman was outstanding in this campaign: Mrs Rahera Muriwai Uru, later Mrs Morrison. Her descent from famous ancestors—Ruahunui of Ngai-tahu, Tutimakahu of Ngati-mamoe and Tuturu of the Westland branch—added power to her campaigning.

In 1921 a commission recommended compensation on 12,500,000 acres amounting to £354,000.<sup>5</sup> Government after government resisted producing the money until 1944, when Parliament granted £10,000 a year to the Ngai-tahu Trust Board for thirty years—later to be extended in perpetuity.<sup>6</sup>

At the turn of the century Christchurch city people saw little of the Maoris, who mostly lived in their own *papakaingas*: Tuahiwi, Little River, Arowhenua, Taumutu, Rapaki, Port Levy, and Onuku near Akaroa. A small settlement was still holding on at Coalgate. Usually there was a local school, and people were bi-lingual.

Health standards throughout New Zealand were low, with Maori communities worse off than pakehas. The Manunui District Council, one of a number set up under an Act of 1902, paid much attention to housing, water-supply, sanitation and medical services, while local leaders worked closely with country doctors. To fight tuberculosis, the most feared disease, they took the cue



from Nurse Maude. Cold fresh air was considered the best preventative and cure. Accordingly when Te Wai Pounamu boarding-school was opened in the old Ohoka vicarage in 1909, the girls slept in outdoor shelters regardless of frost and storm. One old-girl recollected that she "borrowed" the flat-iron off the stove to warm her freezing bed, with the result that it burned through to the mattress! Other girls were discovered in the morning, fast asleep and fully clothed.

Te Wai Pounamu, which has made a powerful contribution to changing times, began humbly with eight girls, rising to sixteen by 1912. A main concern of the Rev. C. A. Fraer, vicar of Tuahiwi, who launched it, was raising the standards of domestic life. The girls did their own cooking, even putting entries into shows; they ran a small farm, milked the cows, skimmed the milk-pans and made the butter. This was necessary in any case as finance depended on donations and such small fees as parents could afford. But Winifred Opie, M.A. (Canterbury), saw much greater potential when she arrived in 1911 from a tiny Maori school in Pelorus Sound. She taught all subjects at all levels, while doubling for matron whenever a matron was lacking.

Unorthodox, full of vitality and humour, Miss Opie was strict in her standards. Discipline was old-fashioned—offenders received a smack on the bottom, or were sent to bed. Those arriving after 6.30 a.m. for daily service at the little church next door were penalised by getting no sugar on their porridge. (There was a remedy for that, however—a word in the ear of the cook, who put the sugar underneath!) There was plenty of devilment and fun. A nearby creek was good for eels and trout. The local farmers' wives laid on beautiful food when girls were invited for Sunday tea. The school was obliged to be frugal: dripping or syrup on the bread, butter for Sundays only.

But each girl was developed individually. Miss Opie visited her pupils' homes, however remote. Work was selected to suit the girls' state of health, and education taken as far as possible. Magdalene Walscott won a scholarship to Girls' High School, boarded at their hostel and went on to Training College. Before that she was teaching piano to Emmy Paynter who came from the Chathams at the age of nine, while Miss Opie herself taught Arena Momo. Emmy became a teacher too but by a longer route. She worked on the farm and did her secondary lessons at night, went pupil-teaching at Phillipstown and was urged on to Training

College by Miss Opie's father: there was an interval, though, when she served as acting-matron to the school.

That was in 1922 when Te Wai Pounamu was transferred to Ferry Road, and the girls had to clean up and settle in. The following year, when Miss Opie left, the Sisters of the Community of the Sacred Name took charge. Their ways were austere and they could not sustain those high standards of teaching, but it was not their fault that the school nearly went under during the slump years, when Maori families often were near to starving. Unemployment relief was denied on the grounds that they could "live off the land". The expense of the Ngai-tahu Claim had drained Maori resources further, while help from Church and State was meagre. The Sisters had no means of raising money and sometimes literally did not know where the next meal was coming from.

Into this struggle against material poverty came a woman rich in everything else that was needed. "On loan" for six months, Hilda Harding stayed on through years of dedication. She was effectively running the school long before she became principal in 1941. Her commonsense, delightful sense of humour and motherly affection gave the girls the confidence and pride which they needed. Like Miss Opie, she visited their homes. A pakeha herself, she became attuned to *Maoritanga* and married a Maori, Jim Daniels, afterwards living in a tiny cottage at the school.

Achievements rose, whether measured in examination passes or in the subsequent lives of the girls. Many became teachers or nurses; many have contributed greatly to community and cultural life. Mrs Daniels used her gifts and her energy to enlist help where she needed it. People she had known at University or in connection with the early health camps were drawn in. Retired teachers gave their services, and a kindergarten teacher was boarded for the supervision of "prep". Salaries were small, the Principal's included. Weno Tahiwī, sister of Kingi Tahiwī, was brought in to teach Maori culture; afterwards older girls like Rima Tikao carried on and Ngai-tahu women like Tokomaru Ryan of Tuahiwī. For many years Mrs Shrubshall was a congenial matron.

When Rotary Club members came to put up a new fence, John Stewart was impressed with the need for much more and got down to the business of solid financial support. He founded the Friends of Te Wai Pounamu which, with the Old Girls' Association

(initiated by Kia Riwai in 1941), provided a body of people who could always be called upon for help.

After Mrs Daniels retired in 1961 a permanent replacement was not easily found. In any case, education was changing and a wider choice of subjects was then being offered in the larger schools. An arrangement was made with Avonside Girls' High School for general education while the Maori side of teaching was carried on at Te Wai Pounamu.<sup>7</sup>

Pakehas who see only an occasional concert party are apt to regard "Maori culture" as representing only a time that has gone. It is true that ancient *waiatas* are faithfully preserved (as Shakespeare is preserved in English) but the living practice responds, as all cultures do, to the realities of today, and influences those realities in its turn. In the visual arts, for example, flax food-baskets may be the same as ever, but the flax art work of Cath Brown from Taumutu is excitingly new.

*Poi*, *haka*, ancient *waiata*, action songs and oratory are bound up with tribal activity. They belong to the great occasions of birth, death, welcome and farewell, triumph and achievement, and the making of important decisions. Maoris who met Commonwealth Games athletes at the Christchurch airport in 1974 were giving a genuine welcome, not merely providing entertainment. Competitions and demonstrations apart from such occasions are nevertheless contributing to tribal life by the high standards of skill that they foster.

Performances took place at the model Maori village in the Christchurch International Exhibition of 1906. Tuahiwi reinforced with song and *haka* its many welcomes to distinguished visitors.<sup>8</sup>

A wider opportunity came to several young South Islanders when the Rev. A. J. Seamer ("Te Hima"), head of the Methodist Maori Missions, an expert musician and a fluent Maori speaker, built up his concert party. Its three-part programme, "The Maori Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" toured New Zealand. Under the name of the Waiata Maori Choir the group went twice to Australia and once to Britain where a Royal performance was included. Inia Te Wiata was in it for a time. South Islanders included Mori Morrison, Airini and Linda Grennell, Tony Tikao Barrett, and Taka Ropata and Joe Moss who met and married in the choir. In their travels the choir often stayed on *maraes* and deepened their knowledge of the old people. Mr Seamer also



arranged for some of the girls to take time off to train at Deaconess House: their talents were not for themselves alone.

The link between cultural activity and community welfare reappeared during the Second World War, when the Kati Otautahi concert party was busy raising funds, giving farewells, and generally providing a focal point. Te Kiato Riwai (Kia), after returning from overseas nursing service, for which she received the B.E.M., was active in this club, along with Te Aritaua Pitama, his sister Wairemaana and others of their family and friends. After the war Te Ari Pitama led a local "Melodies of Maoriland" party.

Kia Riwai came from the Chatham Islands but her father was of Ngai-tahu. As a very small girl she found the train journey from Lyttelton to Christchurch a terrifying experience. Once the shuddering monster entered the tunnel of darkness, Kia went under the seat and no enticements could bring her out! Te Wai Pounamu school set her on the way to becoming a fine administrator, with a great fund of resourcefulness, active in sports and especially welfare.

Social needs changed rapidly during and after the First World War. Maori women were always active in their own areas, but until then had not needed any special organisations apart from the W.C.T.U. The war not only brought Maori women into employment, as it did other women, along with voluntary war work, it also brought rural Maoris into towns and cities and set going the migration of North Islanders to the South. The drift to the cities continued, for in any case the population growth around the *papakaingas* was outstripping the work available.

When Kia Riwai became women's welfare officer with the Maori Affairs Department (following Mori Ellison, the first appointee) her work extended to the girls on seasonal work in Nelson and Marlborough. They were feeling the loss of their settled homes and so Kia formed culture groups, with local competitions. This was the first step towards the larger competitions of 1965 which drew teams from far afield in the South Island. Kia Riwai was the driving force, the Maori Affairs Department was the initiator, and the organising team included Terry Ryan, Ethel Walters, and Kui Kamo with her daughters Patti, Marlene and Brenda. When Kia died in 1967 the Waitaha Council was formed to carry on with an annual event for the Canterbury clubs. (Waitaha is the Maori name for Canterbury.)

The new clubs which sprang up away from the *papakaingas*

were often associated with churches, hostels, schools or colleges, and were inter-tribal. Fresh talent, traditions and inspiration flowed from the North Island migrants. They were drawn upon too when the South Island party was assembled for the welcome to Queen Elizabeth II at the Cook bicentenary celebrations in Gisborne in 1970. Wairemaana Pitama-Riwai travelled the island for recruiting and initial training, and the combined party was brought up to a high standard by her and John Crofts. Mrs Pitama-Riwai had roots in Rapaki and in a family steeped in tradition. Endowed with a glorious voice, expressive hands and a gift for composition, she had guided many cultural groups and had a particular interest in children. The programme included her superb *waiata* in tribute to the Queen. The whole presentation was a triumph. North Island Maoris were frankly amazed at this vitality and depth of feeling surging up from the South.

It was substantially the same team and programme which welcomed visitors to the Commonwealth Games some four years later.

Also inter-tribal, but built on Ngai-tahu support, have been the efforts to create an urban marae. A forerunner was the Maori Community Centre in which Taka and Joe Moss (then a welfare officer) were prominent. It had Sunday gatherings and varied activities, and looked forward to a permanent home. However, the first meeting-house built in modern Christchurch is associated with Rehua, the Methodist hostel for apprentices in Springfield Road. (The original Rehua in Stanmore Road accommodated girls for the first two years until the needs of apprentices were found to be greater. The Presbyterian Church catered for girls after that, with Roseneath.) The missionary, the Rev. W. E. Falkingham saw to the organising work and the raising of funds. A North Island master, Henare Paikea Toka, was brought in to carve the panels, which represent traditions of all major tribes; local women worked on the *tukutuku* panels and the Ngai-tahu ancestor Tahu Potiki was honoured in the *tekoteko* over the doorway. Te Whatu Manawa o Rehua was opened with due ceremony in 1960.

Rehua marae is now vested in the Ngai-tahu people and their invitees, as a Maori reservation, with trustees covering all active *runangas* in Canterbury. It has provided a beautiful and welcoming venue for many occasions. Its main limitations have arisen from the small outdoor space available. The same is true of the Catholic Maori Centre, Te Rangimarie, in Gloucester Street, which like

Rehua has never been restricted to the denomination which sponsored it.

Rehua has a lounge named in honour of Te Kiato Riwai and her tireless work for this place and its young apprentices—one more example of why Maori women's history cannot be separated from Maori history in general. The Maori problems have loomed large and the women's problem has often been how to find the best way to help.

The big change came with the formation of the Maori Women's Welfare League. The League began in the North Island in 1951. Mrs Ruku Arahanga, who became a stalwart in Canterbury, joined that year in Raetihi. Maori delegates to the 1952 Pan-Pacific Women's Conference in Christchurch included Mrs Rumatiki Wright, who afterwards addressed a Maori meeting. The Christchurch branch was the first in the South Island, with Mrs Taka Moss as president. Rapaki and Tuahiwi branches followed and the League spread rapidly, with the energetic Kia Riwai among others spurring it on.

Work was already to hand in finding accommodation for migrant girls. Welfare was the League's business, and individual problems were complicated when dealings with government departments had to go through Wellington. One of the League's first successful battles was to have a district office of the Maori Affairs Department opened in Christchurch.

The record of the M.W.W.L. includes fostering pre-school education, and carrying the benefit of this experience to the aborigines in Australia; supporting the Maori Education Foundation; campaigning for the teaching of Maori language in schools, and for the training of fluent Maori speakers to teach it; upholding the retention of Maori land; promoting urban maraes; teaching and demonstrating Maori culture and craft work, including classes and clubs in schools. Prisons and other institutions have been visited.

Along with all this has gone the extending of helping hands to those in need. Such work is seldom visible to the public eye. The many hours often needed to straighten out the difficulties of just one person may be complicated by the inability of pakeha officials to grasp what the trouble really is; a Maori outlook, an understanding of Maori values may be needed and sometimes this can be given only by another Maori.

Sports have also played a part in building both morale and physical fitness. Maoris have always entered team games with



zest. Up to the 1930s a special attraction at tribal meetings was the tug-o'-war, and there was no sex discrimination in that: women competed too, with weights assessed so that perhaps six women could be matched against five men—and beat them.

Hockey was very popular for a time but in recent years netball has taken the lead. For more than twenty years the South Island Maori Netball Tournament has been held in one town after another. This is a *hui* for all ages, local and family teams at all levels, with the Pitama Cup as the big prize; older people watching and providing the meals, the small children running about, and everyone revelling in the “togetherness” of the occasion.

One of the M.W.W.L. stalwarts, Aroha Chick, of Christchurch and Tuahiwi, received in 1972 the “Young Maori Woman of the Year” award, a national honour now discontinued. This recognised her exceptional contribution to the community. As an executive member of the M.W.W.L. she visits and assists other South Island branches; she is always at hand as a voluntary welfare officer and often attends the courts; she demonstrates crafts, takes part in performances, and teaches Maori culture to the children of the Tuahiwi school; she has served on the Otautahi Maori Committee, has actively promoted the setting up of the Commission for Maori Reserve Lands, and is a co-trustee for these Ngai-tahu lands in North Canterbury.<sup>9</sup>

It is impossible here to detail the devoted and dedicated work of many other women who have performed similar service. Much welfare and educational work, for example, has been done outside the M.W.W.L. One woman has worked in quite a different sphere: since 1967 the M.P. for Southern Maori has been a Ngai-tahu woman, who has held Cabinet rank. Whetu Tirikatene-Sullivan followed her father and has wide academic, social and political experience, combined with artistic gifts. Her parliamentary career has shown her to be sensitive to the needs of women generally as well as those of her Maori constituents.

The last eighty years have brought some evident changes in Canterbury as throughout New Zealand: the migration to the cities from rural land and from the North Island; the ending of rural isolation by motor transport; the increasing Maori proportion of the total population, especially in the younger age groups; the rising level of education; a wider participation of Maoris in the general run of New Zealand life, such as employment, sports and public affairs; and a greater awareness by the general public of Maori needs and wishes. At the same time there are still more

Maoris than pakehas in lower-paid, unskilled or semi-skilled employment; more Maoris than pakehas as tenants in unsatisfactory houses; more Maoris than pakehas providing for big families. And there are still unsolved grievances of long standing.

The intermingling has not made the Maori less Maori. On the contrary, *Maoritanga* is throbbing with life and vigour. It is still true that a Maori lives in two worlds, the one that is shared with the pakeha and one that is specially Maori.

With this dual role, a Maori woman may contend with difficulties and discrimination on three levels: as a Maori, as a woman, and as a worker and consumer. For the last, she can and often does turn to trade unions or similar organisations; indeed the Housewives' Boycott Movement against high prices in 1977 was launched by a Maori, Mrs Kathy Himiona. But in Maori matters women have increasingly asserted themselves and taken up a stronger role, not against the men but alongside them, making women's own distinctive contribution. So the continuing thread from the old ways has been woven into the life of today.

# Women in Trade Unions

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“WOMEN seldom take any interest in union affairs. It’s disgraceful!” declared the forthright secretary of a union whose members are predominantly women. “I am sorry for you, having to write about women in unions,” said another. “There’s nothing to tell.” It was not always so. Few women came to the fore publicly, but many have held positions of responsibility in their unions.

The Christchurch Tailoresses’ and Pressers’ Union was the first in Canterbury with a majority of women. Women consistently outnumbered men on the committee, and worked to prepare detailed cases for wage negotiations; they were sent as delegates to Tailoresses’ Federation conferences to thrash out important policy decisions.

This union is particularly well recorded, as short histories were produced on its 21st, 50th and 60th anniversaries. Founded on 26 August, 1890, it had an immense task ahead of it to combat the practices in factories known as sweating. This was an iniquitous system whereby employees were paid such low wages that they had to take work home after hours to earn enough to ward off starvation. Some worked until one or two a.m. after a full day’s work at the factory. It was feared that women who had been forced to spend the best part of their youth in such slavery would be incapable of producing a healthy race of children. Humane employers who would have liked to treat their employees well found unscrupulous rivals undercutting them, and were faced with ruin. In 1889 F. S. Parker, president of the Christchurch Tailors’ and Tailoresses’ Union (forerunner of the Tailoresses’ and Pressers’ Union), told his fellow-unionists in Dunedin how trousers were being made cheaply in Christchurch and declared, “With trousers being made at 4½d. a pair, ought not any man to be ashamed to put such things on his legs?” Low pay and long hours were not the only hardship women workers had to contend with. Often workrooms had no proper ventilation or heating, were



overcrowded, and the workers were expected to use them as their lunch-room.

The union's first chance to do something positive came in March 1890 when the Government, in response to public opinion aroused by the churches and the press, set up the "Sweating Commission", and evidence was given of the principal abuses. When the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act was passed in 1894, agreements between unions and employers were made legally binding, and arbitration in court could result if efforts at conciliation failed. The union insisted that no work was to be taken home from the factory, but some tailoresses were so desperate for money that they continued to take work home hidden under their clothing: both employer and employee were liable to prosecution for such evasions and the practice gradually died out.

Factory inspectors were appointed, two of the early ones being Mrs Grace Neill and Miss Margaret Scott. Mrs Neill reported in Christchurch in 1895 that she was favourably impressed by hours of work and sanitary conditions and fair wages "except in the dressmaking trade and in the country districts". The dress-makers did not form a union until 1919, and their pay and conditions remained noticeably worse than those of the tailoresses. It was common for girls to work as dressmakers for no pay, as they regarded their work as a preparation for matrimony. Employers would take on girls as unpaid "apprentices" for a year, and then dismiss them and employ a new batch of unpaid learners. This made life very difficult for any women who depended on this work for their livelihood.

The Tailoresses' and Pressers' Union continued to go from strength to strength. Realising that financial soundness was essential, it fixed subscriptions at sixpence a week for men and threepence for women. Paid collectors were employed, and their "pence books" were audited; any defaulters (unionists or collectors) were warned, and if necessary legal action was taken. Unions incurred heavy expenses if they took a case to the Arbitration Court. Money had also to be found for delegates to conferences in other parts of New Zealand. There were subscriptions to be paid to the Trades and Labour Council, and levies to the Federation. Money was donated to assist other unionists: £25 was given to the Brunner Relief fund in 1896 after a mine disaster, and in 1897 £10 was sent to England for the Engineers' Lockout Fund. If any of the union's own members were off work through illness or



### THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND WOMEN, 1898

*Back row, standing:* Miss A. E. Hockham, Miss J. McKay, Mrs Black, Miss Garstin, Mrs Darling. *Second row, standing:* Mrs Ansell, Mrs H. Smith, Mrs G. Ross, Mrs J. S. Springfield, Mrs Widdowson, Mrs Wallis, Mrs Williamson, Mrs Wilson. *Seated:* Mrs G. J. Smith, Mrs Capt. Daldy, Mrs Hatton (Dunedin, vice-president), Lady Stout (Wellington, vice-president), Mrs Sheppard (Christchurch, president), Mrs Schnackenberg (Auckland, vice-president), Mrs Sievwright (Gisborne, vice-president), Mrs Tasker, Mrs Izett. *Front:* Mrs Atley, Mrs Wells (Christchurch, hon. secretary), Miss Bain (Christchurch, hon. treasurer).





THE NEW ZEALAND SUFFRAGETTE CONTINGENT, HYDE PARK, JULY 1910

Part of a 15,000-strong London demonstration where 150 speakers addressed the crowd. Dr Alice Burn (of dress reform fame) wears academic dress and fern leaves; Lady Stout, in white, is just behind her.



*THE FIRST FIVE WOMEN JUSTICES OF THE PEACE*

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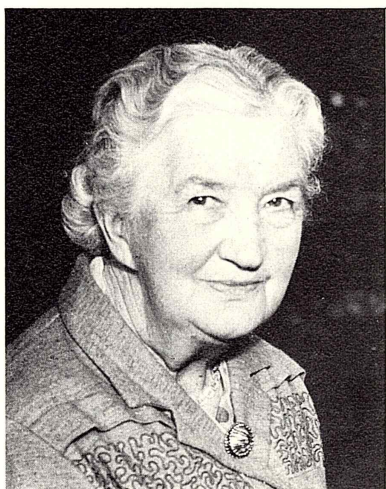


MRS E. B. TAYLOR

Mrs Fraer, Mrs Herbert and Mrs Taylor were associates of the Children's Courts; Mrs Fraer also served on the Prison Board.

**ALICE MEREDITH BURN  
IN HER "RATIONAL  
DRESS", 1894**

An accomplished athlete and brilliant student who married her schoolmaster at the age of sixteen and went on to Canterbury College. Mrs Burn was secretary of both the Atlanta Cycling Club and the Society for Social Ethics. She wrote many articles on dress reform.



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**EVELYN CUNNINGTON**

Social reformer, and founder of the W.E.A. in Christchurch.



dismissal, it was customary to organise a benefit concert or social to raise money to assist them.

Although the Tailoresses had a majority of women members, most of the executive positions were filled by men. It was policy to elect as president some distinguished public figure whenever possible. Thus Professor Bickerton became president in 1892 after being elected an honorary life member. Mr Tanner, M.P., and the Hon. H. G. Ell were other presidents, while the Hon. J. T. Paul became president of the New Zealand Tailoresses' and Pressers' Federation. Such men were a source of strength to the union.

A recurring theme in the records is the cat-and-mouse game that went on with the Kaiapoi Woollen Company, which at that time had a clothing factory in Christchurch. The union was vigilant in the protection of its members. The company had been quoted to the Sweating Commission, and a strike was held in 1889. In 1894 the union successfully insisted that several girls who had been dismissed should be given references. When the company dismissed fifty workers in the same year, the union set up a co-operative factory for the unemployed and ran it for several years.

The tailoresses' pay was calculated according to the "log", which was the basis of the award and set out how long it should take to make a sleeve, for example, and how much should be paid for each sleeve. A change in fashion might result in sleeves taking much longer to make, so that remuneration to the tailoresses would fall. The log proved a fruitful source of disputes between union and management.

In 1899 the company's attention was drawn to the fact that too many apprentices were being employed. In 1904 size eighteen suits were being classed as "knicker suits" and the workers underpaid. The strength of the union can be gauged from the fact that later that year the factory manager, Mr Solomon, asked the permission of the union to place four or five trouser finishers on piecework before they had finished their twelve months' apprenticeship. Later the company decided to send its journeywomen "on holiday" and keep on the coat department apprentices; the union cancelled the company's permit to have excess apprentices. Next, in 1905, the company upset the union by importing workers from Sydney and sending local workers on holiday; a deputation went to the Premier on this occasion.



The union continued to give support to other unions at times, but not indiscriminately. In 1908 two guineas each was voted to wives and children of striking Blackball miners—nothing for the men because the union disapproved of the strike. The same sum was voted to assist the Farm Labourers' Union, with a strong protest at the proposal to exclude them from the Industrial Conciliation & Arbitration Act, and at Judge Sim's refusal to give them an award. In 1909 the union resolved that it approved of compulsory military training and disapproved of the long list of exemptions. The Crown Clothing Factory began to share in the union's opprobrium, with wrongful dismissals and short pay at Christmas and Easter. In 1914 the Kaiapoi company was taken to task about the engine-room being a fire hazard, and in 1915 legal action was taken over below-minimum wages being paid.

By 1916, under stress of war, a change of heart over military training had taken place, and a delegate was sent to Wellington to the anti-conscription congress; £5 5s. was voted to the dependants of people in prison for sedition. The clothing trade had an important part to play in the war effort, and the union was able to negotiate war bonuses at the Arbitration Court. In 1919 a forty-hour week was agreed to, and provision made that women and girls should no longer be called upon to do pressing, as machine-presses were being used. When the Government banned the sale of "working-class literature" in 1921, presumably to stifle industrial unrest, a strong letter of protest was sent, but to no avail; in 1923 a donation of five shillings was made towards the fine of some Auckland men who had sold the banned books.

By the 1930s the union found itself with a falling membership and in financial difficulties. This was due to the effects of the Depression and the introduction of new machines which reduced the numbers of workers needed in factories. It was decided to amalgamate with allied unions, and a merger was negotiated with the Tailors and Dressmakers. It was found possible also to include unionists from Nelson, Marlborough and Westland, and thus one organisation, the Clothing Trades Union, was founded for the whole of the north of the South Island. The introduction of compulsory unionism by the first Labour Government in 1936 gave a further boost to membership.

During the Second World War, union members responded magnificently to the Government's appeal for a special effort to produce uniforms for the troops. Apprenticeship requirements for women over twenty-one were waived for those starting in

factories engaged in war work. However government regulations forbidding workers to leave jobs without the permission of the District Manpower Officer caused much discontent. John Roberts, secretary of the union, told the half-yearly meeting of the Clothing Trades Union in 1942 that such a regulation was reminiscent of restrictions in the Middle Ages. Two women who had handed in their resignations had been threatened with a £50 fine or three months' imprisonment. After representations by the union, the regulations were modified to allow control by factory and production committees. By 1944 Roberts was pressing the Government to allow women to move about from job to job to seek better pay and conditions and more overtime, since there was a shortage of labour and some employers were taking advantage of wartime regulations. In the same year he chaired a meeting addressed by Dr Edith Summerskill from Britain, who called for equal pay for equal work. Mabel Howard took up the issue in Parliament, claiming that this was the way to overcome the shortage of female labour. "Women have learned during the war that they have a punch, and they are going to use it when the manpower restrictions are removed," she said.

The shortage of women in the clothing trade became acute by 1946. The Minister of Industries and Commerce, D. G. Sullivan, speaking at Timaru, advocated diverting men to this work, stepping up immigration, and decentralising industry, but he failed to mention equal pay for women or even any increase in pay. Strangely, the union had always remained silent on the issue of relative pay rates for men and women. The 1896 census figures noted that the average yearly earnings for men in the clothing, boot and shoe trades were £70 15s., while for women they were only £27.12s. In 1919 the Tailoresses' and Pressers' Union applied to the Arbitration Court for an increase in weekly wages to £4 10s. for men and only £2 5s. for women. As early as 1897 the National Council of Women was calling for equal pay and the Public Service Association supported the cause after 1914.

In 1977 the Clothing Trades Union had a membership of about 3400, of whom about eighty-five per cent were women.

It is hard to realise today that in the early years of the colonisation of New Zealand the great majority of single women immigrants were domestic servants, an occupation that is rare now. They far outnumbered the tailoresses, but they never succeeded in forming themselves into a strong union. Their attempts to improve their conditions were far from successful,

and gradually girls drifted off to the factories where pay was properly regulated and hours were enforceable by law and conditions policed by the unions and factory inspectors.

There were good and bad employers of domestics, but the bad ones earned the lion's share of publicity in the columns of the *Lyttelton Times*. A correspondent wrote in 1893: "I think girls should not work more than 14 hours a day and should have the other 10 for rest"; and in 1894: "If a girl wishes to go out when her work is done, why should she have to beg leave?" In 1896 the accusation was made that some domestics were not properly fed, and that many employers were not even allowing them a half-holiday each week. Pay and time off were entirely at the whim of the employer: 2s. 6d. or 3s. a week was thought sufficient remuneration at a time when tailoresses could expect 20s to 25s.

Low pay and bad conditions led many girls to resort to prostitution. In 1894 Dr Julius, Bishop of Christchurch, chaired a meeting at which it was proposed to make it illegal for any girl under twenty-one "to earn her living by immorality and degradation". In 1895 it was estimated there were three hundred women and girls publicly and privately engaged in prostitution in Christchurch. In 1897 girls of fourteen to seventeen were reported to be on the streets: ninety percent of the inmates of the "Rescue Homes" had been domestic servants paid only two or three shillings a week. Presumably some worthy matrons of Christchurch put down such degradation of former servant girls as due to inherent lack of moral fibre, without any thought of their own shortcomings as employers.

It is not surprising that a chronic shortage of "slaveys" began to be felt in the Colony. "To a large extent the lack of good female domestics is the result of the growing independence of Colonial womanhood . . . nearly all the smart, intelligent girls aim at going into shops or workrooms, for when the day's work is over they are free to enjoy themselves," wrote the *Canterbury Times* in 1893. There were calls for domestic service to be learnt as a trade, and envious eyes were cast at the nurses whose status was so greatly raised when training and registration were introduced.

An early effort to organise domestics was made by Mrs A. Garmson in 1894. She addressed a meeting in the Temperance Hall, telling the workers that the object of unionism was to "bring grievances before their employers". In 1907 an attempt was made to set standards. A circular was sent to employers demanding a maximum sixty-eight-hour week, with uniforms supplied and a



well-ventilated bedroom. This was the beginning of a union for domestics at last. A conference was proposed by the union, but after inconclusive discussions the employers refused to go any further in the matter. Financial assistance was received from other unions so that the subject could be taken to the Arbitration Court. A sharp blow was the ruling that domestics were excluded from the provisions of the I.C. & A. Act because they were not employed for their employers' gain.

The Domestic Workers Union was finally registered in 1908 with fifty-nine members, but membership fell steadily until in 1911 it failed to send in returns and registration was cancelled. Many servants were not convinced of the necessity for a union, for the continuing shortage of domestics meant that anyone who was not satisfied with the way she was being treated could simply move to another job. The long hours worked made it almost impossible for union officials to arrange meetings and this stifled any feeling of unity. Fewer and fewer girls would take on domestic work. In 1937 a group of Christchurch women set up the Household Service Campaign Committee, proposing to train a national corps of domestic workers to be paid and hired out by the Government. But to no avail. The Second World War dealt the death blow to the occupation, and the majority of prospective employers had to learn to do their own cooking and cleaning.

So much for two unions which tried to advance the interests of women members, one largely successful, the other a failure. Look now at a few outstanding women who rose to prominence in the trade union movement, refuting the claim that women unionists leave all the responsibility to men.

Perhaps the earliest woman to attract attention in union affairs in Canterbury was Mrs A. Garmson. She had come to New Zealand from Australia in the 1890s and worked to better conditions for women workers and the unemployed. Then she was appointed secretary of the Christchurch branch of the New Zealand Workers' Union, which was at that time a branch of the Australian Workers' Union and maintained close links with it. When trouble blew up in Australia in 1894 and Queensland shearers went on strike for better wages and conditions the Australian pastoralists put advertisements in the Christchurch papers offering a free passage from Lyttelton to the sheds in Australia for shearers willing to cross the Tasman. As there was considerable unemployment in New Zealand at the time this was an attractive

offer. But Mrs Garmson left nobody in any doubt as to her views in the matter. She wrote to the *Lyttelton Times* exhorting New Zealand shearers not to "cross the pond", but to stand firm "each for all and all for each" with the strikers. The Australian Pastoralists' Union had engaged 150 shearers to travel to Australia in the S.S. *Hauroto*. The Christchurch N.Z.W.U. countered by appointing Mrs Garmson its delegate to travel steerage with the men and talk them into changing their minds. She was remarkably successful. She spent the entire voyage using "persuasion and sarcasm" on the "scabs"; 75 left the ship at Wellington; 64 went on to Sydney, but of these 31 went over to the union, so that only 33 were left to go shearing. Mrs Garmson was then put in charge of the Sydney office of the Australian Workers' Union for ten days. When she returned to Christchurch she related how the union was making life difficult for the pastoralists: when non-union shearers were requested, unskilled men would be sent who would then have to be sacked. Mrs Garmson's exploits on *Hauroto* caught the imagination of the cartoonist of the *N.Z Graphic* who produced a full page of ten cartoons illustrating the events. The strike collapsed soon after her return, but the tradition of co-operation between the unionists of Australia and New Zealand is still sometimes invoked.

Miss Ettie Rout was never a member of any union, but she used her ability as a journalist to further the cause of unionism in Canterbury. She came to New Zealand from Tasmania in 1887 at the age of ten. She later attended Canterbury College where she graduated M.A., after studying under Professor Bickerton, who was responsible for arousing her interest in trade unionism. She went on to become qualified as a high-speed shorthand-typist (180 words a minute) and an authorised reporter under the Shorthand Reporters' Act of 1900. It was unconventional in those days for a girl to be so independent, but she further flouted contemporary ideas about suitable behaviour for women by wearing trousers, shirt and sandals as she rode about on her bicycle. After some early efforts to improve conditions for shop assistants, she became an associate of James Thorn, the young and enthusiastic secretary of the Farm Labourers' Union.

At that time farm labourers could be compelled to work very long hours. On some farms accommodation was appalling, the men being expected to sleep all the year round on sacks in a loft. Mr Flatman, M.P. for Geraldine, had aroused indignation when he introduced his Farm Labourers' Accommodation Bill, stating

that "a waterproof tent shall be deemed to be sufficient accommodation under the Act". The labourers countered with a demand for separate sleeping accommodation for each employee and a fireplace for drying clothes. Pay was another grievance. Gone were the days when a farm labourer could hope to save enough to buy his own farm.

Growing dissatisfaction led to a decision to approach the Arbitration Court. James Thorn and Ettie Rout prepared a detailed case, with rates of pay, hours of work, conditions and holidays clearly set out. On 5 August 1907 the Arbitration Court opened its hearing in the Provincial Council Chambers in Christchurch. During the whole of the proceedings, lasting nearly a year, Ettie Rout recorded the evidence as official reporter. Because she knew the union was hampered by lack of funds, she returned a cheque for £70 paid to her by the union for work on the case. In spite of all efforts, however, the union's case was unsuccessful. Attempts by the union to lay down strict hours of work and exact times for holidays were shown by the farmers to be impractical, and this weakened the whole case.

After the farm labourers' dispute, Ettie Rout interested herself in improving pay and conditions for shearers, and went on to help Mark Fagan prepare a case for an award for the West Coast gold-miners. She became convinced of the need for a workers' newspaper, and in 1910 she founded and edited the *Maoriland Worker* for the Shearers' Federation, at the time when they were working for recognition of a rise in pay to £1 per 100 sheep. The paper included articles on labour matters and brought news of issues throughout New Zealand and Australia. However, it is noticeable that women were seldom mentioned even though the editor was a woman. The Shearers' Union found the paper a costly venture, and on one occasion the editor had to pawn her office fittings and typewriter to finance an issue. In 1911 publication was taken over by the Federation of Labour and headquarters were moved to Wellington.

Miss Mabel Howard was another prominent unionist who came from Australia at an early age. She was born in Adelaide in 1894 but after her mother died her father decided to bring his three young daughters to Christchurch. Mabel, the eldest, ran the home as well as attending school at New Brighton. Her father, E. J. Howard, was actively interested in the Trade Union movement and became secretary of the Canterbury General Labourers' Union. After studying commercial subjects at the Christchurch Institute,



she joined her father in the Labourers' Union office when she was eighteen years old. She was employed full-time at a salary of £2 a week. When her father was elected to Parliament in 1919 she continued as office assistant to the new secretary, H. Worrall, but as he was growing old, she found she was more and more called on to run the affairs of the union. In May 1933 she was given a day off work to attend the elections of the Christchurch City Council, for which she was a candidate: she was elected at the age of thirty-nine.

When Worrall retired in 1934 Mabel Howard was appointed secretary of the union. Her pay was then £10 a fortnight and she was supplied with an office bike. She proved herself a most vigorous secretary, and was seen everywhere on her bicycle. Her direct methods of extracting union subscriptions from members are legendary: climbing scaffolding, venturing out on to pontoons and clambering over bales of wool to nail her men. Her members were some of the toughest unionists in Canterbury, but this short, stout woman was a match for the toughest, and was not above trading a pithy swearword when occasion demanded. But for all that she looked upon herself as a mother and a father to her union members and cared for them when they suffered from illness or misfortune. She never forgot having worked at the canteens for the unemployed during the Depression. When she took over as secretary, membership was at a low ebb because of extensive unemployment brought about by the Depression. The membership rose from three hundred to seven thousand during her term of office, due in large part to the introduction of compulsory unionism in 1936.

In 1939 her father died, and Mabel Howard expressed the wish to follow him into Parliament. However, she was passed over for selection for his seat and had to wait until 1943 when she won the Christchurch South seat at a by-election. Later boundary changes caused this seat to become the Sydenham electorate. She held this seat without a break for twenty years. Election meant the end of her work for the Canterbury General Labourers' Union, but Miss Howard, M.P., continued to speak in Parliament for the interests of unionists. One issue brought up was that of equal pay for women. She vigorously attacked the State of Emergency Regulations introduced in the 1951 waterfront strike, whereby the homes of suspected unionists could be searched by the police without a warrant. But she was equally wary of the

far Left, and warned, "When Communists appear they first start to destroy the trade union secretaries."

In more recent times, Mrs Mary Batchelor has gone on from trade union work to a seat in Parliament. For over seven years she was field officer for the Canterbury Clerical Workers' Union, before being elected to the Avon seat in 1972. As field officer she travelled throughout the district listening to complaints from clerical workers while collecting subscriptions. She gained special recognition for her work on the Committee for Equal Pay, and now that this issue has been won she is taking up the battle for equal opportunity for women.

Mrs Hilary Jones had the distinction of being elected to the executive of the Canterbury Trades Council in December 1976. She had been the delegate to the Trades Council for the Canterbury, Marlborough and Westland Cleaners' and Caretakers' Union for six years before this and had been assistant secretary. She has also been appointed by the N.Z. Federation of Labour to serve on their first Women's Advisory Committee.

In the past it has been usual for improvements in women's pay and conditions to be merely an adjunct of concessions won by men. Men as unionists and executives have had the drive and determination to win through, with women unionists often content to reap some of the benefits won largely by others. This passivity of women unionists, even in unions where women far outnumbered men, may explain the unions' small part in the struggle for equal pay. Nevertheless, unions have been a strong factor in improving the pay and conditions of women workers and in influencing governments to pass protective legislation. The old feeling that it is unfeminine for women to hold office in unions may be on the wane, and as time goes on, with today's climate favouring equality of the sexes, more women will come forward and accept positions of responsibility in unions. So much has been won, and is now taken for granted by women workers, that union secretaries sometimes find apathy at their meetings. But if strong organisations lie dormant at times, they can still be a force to be reckoned with when aroused.

## Women and Health

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PREGNANCY and childbirth were hazardous for the pioneer women of early Canterbury, as they were for all women in those days. The turn of the century brought no real change from the delivery and post-natal techniques of the nineteenth century midwife.

The well-known Christchurch midwife, Anne Thompson, commenced her brief training in the late 1880s after bearing thirteen children herself—not an uncommon size for a Victorian family. She was recommended to her patients by Christchurch doctors and had a largely middle-class clientele. No matter what the patient's status, midwifery was always drudgery. Employed not only for her midwifery talents, she was expected to be as well cook, nurse and maid for the rest of the patient's family. Mrs Thompson often delivered babies on the kitchen-table, but her fortunate patients could rest assured that theirs would be a comparatively hygienic delivery with little fear of sepsis.<sup>1</sup> To her credit, not one mother died under her care, although she was depressed by the generally high infant mortality rate.<sup>2</sup>

To those living in isolation, difficulties in childbirth could mean death, usually from haemorrhage or infection. One woman vividly remembers miscarrying in 1916 when she was twenty weeks pregnant. As she lived inland from Cheviot, her husband had to ride three miles along shingle riverbed to the nearest telephone. He then found the Cheviot doctor was busy so the Amberley doctor was called. By the time he arrived and wrongly admonished his patient for procuring her own miscarriage, the woman had lost her baby. The miscarriage itself and the doctor's examination to make sure it was complete were both unpleasant and dangerous experiences, but at least she was fortunate in being able to afford a well-trained nurse from Christchurch to take care of her afterwards.<sup>3</sup>

After the First World War, doctors' services were difficult to obtain in many parts of Canterbury and large numbers of women



were still obliged to deliver their babies at home, with only older, usually untrained, women to help them. A Geraldine doctor recalls seeing one such woman about to sever the umbilical cord with a pair of scissors taken straight from her pocket.<sup>4</sup>

The advent of small nursing cottages in the early 1900s made life easier for the woman who could afford to have her baby there. The six-bed Geraldine Maternity Hospital opened in 1924 by Sir Maui Pomare, Minister of Health, was typical of these.<sup>5</sup> The cottages were intended to increase the efficiency of the trained midwives by centralising their patients, but, unfortunately, in them the sepsis rate was increased. This was before sterilization techniques and the use of rubber gloves became widespread. One would expect, with the progressive thinking behind such cottages, the liberation of the midwife from her anachronistic role as general drudge, but not so. The Matron of the Geraldine Hospital cooked, scrubbed and washed as well as caring for her patients.

Attempts at regulating family size before the 1920s were primitive<sup>6</sup> and frequently extreme through sheer desperation. Information on birth control was not freely available and the existing techniques were generally unreliable. Many women depended on the co-operation of their husbands to use a sheath or to practise coitus interruptus, or they might have known that a sponge soaked in oil and inserted into the vagina before intercourse could reduce the chance of conception.<sup>7</sup>

The medical profession was united in its stand against birth control. Most doctors maintained that women were selfish in wanting to limit their families, especially as the birth rate had dropped considerably between the 1880s and the end of World War I. One doctor wrote: "It is yet sad but true that apparently an increasing number are unwilling to undertake the pains and cares of childbearing, and women are more to blame than men for the deplorably decreasing birthrate, and educated women are more culpable than their working-class sisters."<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, many women in the early twentieth century still saw themselves as pioneers in a new country and regarded it as their duty to increase the population. Contraception was described as "the dark deed".<sup>9</sup> The belief of the midwife Mrs Thompson that the Lord was responsible for sending children into the world and that He would provide for them<sup>10</sup> was not unusual.

New Zealand governments have retained a conservative attitude to birth control. Official mutilation of magazines by customs clerks was practised before World War II.<sup>11</sup> One newspaper

protested: "These advertisements for the most part relate to methods of birth control, and the assumption is that New Zealanders are a very innocent community entirely ignorant on such a subject and that if they were allowed to read the advertisements they would be tempted to import the commodities advertised."<sup>12</sup>

Up to World War II, the abortion rate was very high. The McMillan Commission which reported in 1936 showed clearly the continued high incidence of criminal abortions. The Commission cited such reasons as economic hardship, fear of ostracism in the unmarried, ignorance of contraception, and fear of labour, for women resorting to criminal abortion. In the year to March 1936 the Commission estimated that for the 24,295 live births in New Zealand about 4000 criminal abortions were performed, and suggested that this was a conservative figure. Between 1931 and 1935 twenty-two women were known to have died in Christchurch alone from sepsis arising from a criminal abortion. The Commission considered the 1908 Crimes Act section on abortion adequate; this provided that an abortion could be legally performed when the mother's life was seriously endangered by continuing the pregnancy. The commissioners were opposed to abortion for social or economic reasons and believed the remedy to unwanted pregnancies lay in improving social conditions.

The Commission also opposed sterilization as a family-planning method and, apart from approving the use of contraceptives, recommended that the legal status quo be maintained.<sup>13</sup> This, of course, did nothing to lessen the risk for women not qualifying for a legal abortion, when they visited the back-street abortionist.

Women themselves were subject to the same fears and prejudices as men. For instance, in 1937 Drs Doris Gordon and Francis Bennett were suggesting that "the rank and file of people have not the mental capacity to handle it [birth control] with caution"<sup>14</sup> and that "birth control which was meant to benefit the few has become a way of escape for the majority".<sup>15</sup> Other women echoed the fears of some men doctors, reported in the *N.Z. Medical Journal*, that birth control threatened to extinguish the population of white people in New Zealand.

The chapter on trade unions has mentioned the link between the number of prostitutes in Christchurch and the miserable wages paid to domestic servants. Members of the Canterbury Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Canterbury Women's Institute joined to fight for the repeal of the Contagious



Diseases Act of 1869 and unsuccessfully petitioned Parliament in 1896. The Act enabled policemen to round up women they considered to be prostitutes and to have them examined for signs of venereal disease. If they were found to be infected they could be detained in prison,<sup>16</sup> but the penalties of this "legal insult"<sup>17</sup> did not apply to men. "The medical profession generally supports the myth that women become infected spontaneously, or maybe by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and then proceed, out of spite, to infect the male flowers of the nation."<sup>18</sup> The Act was eventually repealed in 1910.

Venereal diseases persisted, however, and in 1916 the Social Hygiene Society was formed in Christchurch as a result of a lecture given to a group of women by Dr Platts Mills. The Society arranged for treatment of women infected with the disease,<sup>19</sup> and concerned itself with the moral tone of Christchurch by assisting mothers "by means of lectures and suitable literature to instruct their children in the principles of social purity and sex hygiene".<sup>20</sup> The society distributed pamphlets and employed Nurse Chappell to lecture to groups of women in churches, schools and prisons.

Sybilla Maude, O.B.E., is a legend to the thousands of people in Christchurch she helped between 1896, when she started district nurse work on her own, and her death in 1935, and also to those who have benefited in recent years from the work carried on in her name. Nurse Maude's life and work have been well documented by Edith Somers Cocks. Her service to the people of Christchurch cannot be overestimated. Nurse Maude's immediate concern was to treat the poor and the sick in their own homes. As an extension of her district nursing work she developed two seaside camps near New Brighton for tuberculosis sufferers, the first in New Zealand, in the belief that isolation, plenty of fresh air and good food were necessary for a cure.<sup>21</sup> Nurse Maude pioneered industrial nursing by offering local factories the use of her rooms and services.<sup>22</sup> During the 1918 influenza epidemic, when Christchurch was almost brought to a standstill for two weeks, Nurse Maude was approached by the health authorities to arrange assistance.<sup>23</sup> In the Depression years of the 'thirties Nurse Maude's services were extended to provide soup kitchens and distribute clothes for the unemployed and their families.<sup>24</sup> Nurse Maude "was no ordinary woman, but a pioneer, leading the way to social and health reforms, and showing, by the practical application of her teaching, how these reforms could be carried out".<sup>25</sup>



Nurse Maude was supported by her life-long friend and companion, Sister Rose Godfrey, of the Community of the Sacred Name. It was the unobtrusive work the sisters performed in the community which inspired Nurse Maude's district nursing scheme.<sup>26</sup>

The Nurse Maude District Nursing Association did not stagnate after Nurse Maude's death in 1935. Miss Mona Corkill gave twenty-five dedicated years of service as matron to the association until 1961. During her time it expanded to serve Lyttelton, Rangiora and Kaiapoi.<sup>27</sup> The Home Aid Service was initiated in 1952,<sup>28</sup> giving occasional visits from the nurse and providing relief for sick women with large families.

Many of the women's groups formed in the 1890s, when women were emerging as a political force, were concerned with the physical well-being of women. The Canterbury Women's Institute had the aim of improving health of women by encouraging them to participate in such activities as "gymnastics, games, new dances, athletics, swimming, cycling, rowing, tennis, walking tours, photographic and field clubs".<sup>29</sup> The Women's Christian Temperance Union was "quick to learn the newest theories on food values, the best means of cooking, or diets for children and invalids. Many branches conducted classes to teach girls this information."<sup>30</sup> Some members of the W.C.T.U. campaigned against the dangerous corset and the cumbersome skirt.<sup>31</sup>

The Women's Division of the Farmers' Union initiated a housekeeper scheme which tried to provide reliable help for a sick farmer's wife. The organization extended its aims to discuss wider matters such as birth control. Helen Simpson makes the comment that "this extension of the original purpose of the Division has been by some members resented and opposed; but it is an encouraging reversal of the usual process—women's associations in New Zealand tend to start with high aims and degenerate into tea parties".<sup>32</sup>

The Christchurch branch of the National Council of Women remained active in health matters. Records of the 1940s refer to Mrs J. Tomlinson, a member who worked for many years as official visitor to Sunnyside Hospital "distributing comforts to the patients".<sup>33</sup> These comforts included cigarettes, sweets, fruit and magazines. As a result of this work, Mrs Lillian Cattel, J.P., and City Councillor Miss Mary McLean formed the Mental Welfare Trust as a subcommittee of the National Council of Women's Christchurch branch.

The work of Canterbury's women doctors is not to be ignored simply because most of it is unspectacular. The earlier women medical graduates had to be strong-willed to withstand the hostility of male students and staff who resented their presence. Later came the fight to gain acceptance from the community.

Eleanor Baker was the sixth woman medical graduate in New Zealand. In 1914, after furthering her midwifery qualifications in Dublin, she was appointed to the School Medical Service in Christchurch, which was started in 1912.<sup>34</sup> Her work meant travelling over a third of the South Island and visiting children in 350 state schools. She inspected children for contagious skin diseases, tonsil and adenoid troubles, deafness, bad vision and tooth decay. In her autobiography Dr Baker frequently referred to the opposition and distrust she encountered from men doctors and parents.

Her concern about the prevalence of tooth decay caused her to persevere in sending children of poor parents to the Hospital Dental Outpatients' Department, although this was not really permitted. Eventually the Hospital Board opened a special department for state school children.<sup>35</sup>

Under the supervision of Dr Charles Hercus, she conducted a survey of children with goitre. This work resulted in iodine being added to table salt.<sup>36</sup>

Dr Baker's major contribution was the establishment of classes for those with speech defects.<sup>37</sup> From her autobiography one gains the impression that she was a quiet but determined woman who had to combat resentment from men in her profession throughout her career. She deserves recognition for the twenty-seven years she worked for the Health Department, pioneering the Canterbury School Medical Service.

Dr Margaret Cruikshank, a contemporary of Dr Baker's, was the second woman to graduate from Otago Medical School, in 1897. She worked as a general practitioner in Waimate until her early death in the 1918 influenza epidemic. There is a statue erected in her honour at Waimate.<sup>38</sup>

The work of Dr Jessie Scott and Dr Helen Field was significant in that they both assisted and encouraged in their spare time volunteer workers in the paramedical services.

Dr Scott completed her medical degree in 1909 in Edinburgh, where she was also active in the suffragette movement. During World War I she joined the Scottish Women's Medical Corps, and was awarded the Cross of St Sava by the King of Serbia

for her services to the Serbian Army. In 1924 she returned to Christchurch to work as an obstetrician and gynaecologist at the Christchurch Hospital. Feeling that her authority with the nurses was being undermined by the men doctors, she resigned and went into private practice. For many years she served the Canterbury and West Coast Division of St John Ambulance as the Lady District Superintendent. A reserved woman but with a great sense of humour, Jessie Scott never missed the Students' Procession.<sup>39</sup>

Dr Helen Field worked as a school medical officer from 1940 to 1966 and also contributed much of her time and knowledge to Canterbury groups concerned with health. She was a member of the North Canterbury section of the Red Cross and a founder of the Canterbury Play Centre Association.<sup>40</sup> Dr Field felt particular sympathy towards the parents of disadvantaged children. She believed that family-planning knowledge should be available to everyone, and was an early supporter of the Family Planning Association and the Parents' Centre.<sup>41</sup>

It is not possible to mention all of Canterbury's women doctors but any list would be incomplete if it did not include Dr Vivienne Croxford, who has worked for many years as an obstetrician and gynaecologist, a field dominated by men. She was one of the first doctors in Christchurch to allow husbands to be present at the birth of their children.

It was part of Dr Eleanor Baker's job to select the children who would attend the Sunshine League health camps. Cora Wilding was the chief initiator in the South Island of the League, which aimed "to promote national efficiency by improving national health".<sup>42</sup> One suggested justification for the camps sounds harshly pragmatic today: it was claimed by Dr Renfrew White at the League's inaugural meeting that, without them, if the children of the time were called up for military service in another twenty years, as had happened in 1914, about two-thirds would have to be rejected through physical defects.<sup>43</sup>

Miss Wilding acted as the League's honorary secretary and led many of the camps. As so often in the past, it was only the deserving poor who would be helped. "The parents of the children chosen are all of a self-respecting good type who have fallen on hard times owing to bad economic conditions and all appeared to be putting up a courageous fight."<sup>44</sup> The children were plied with good food, donated by the League's members, and given



*THE FIRST WOMEN DOCTORS*

AIMEE MILLS

She was later Dr Platts-Mills



MARGARET  
CRUIKSHANKS

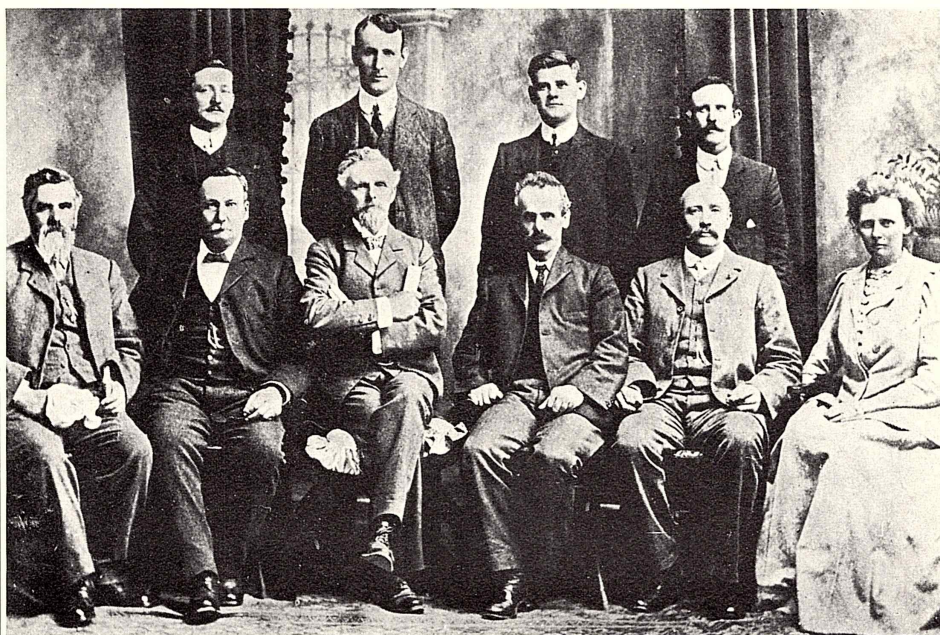
Waimate claims its statue of  
Dr Cruikshanks is the only  
full-sized statue of a woman in  
New Zealand, apart from  
Queen Victoria.











ETTIE ROUT, "SPECIAL REPORTER", 1908

She worked with the Conciliation Board set up to consider the demands of the Canterbury Agricultural Labourers' Union for higher wages, shorter hours and better accommodation. Her union colleagues, J. Thorn and E. Kennedy, are standing at right.



JEAN GRANT

During the Great Depression of the 1930s Mrs Grant was an active figure in radical politics.





**"A MAID OF ALL WORK"  
SCRUBBING STEPS,  
1908**

Domestic servants were notoriously hard-worked and under-paid.

**BABY INCUBATOR,  
1909**

"A great many clever and earnest people have been devoting their attention to reducing the high average of infant mortality," says the *Weekly Press* caption.



plenty of exercise. Each child increased in weight by approximately four pounds.

In November 1932 the League commenced the sale of special health stamps which it was hoped would provide funds for a permanent health camp.<sup>45</sup> The Christchurch health camps and health stamps were not New Zealand's first; both followed similar activities in the North Island.

By the 1950s there was a change in public opinion over questions of women's health. In Christchurch, as elsewhere, some women spoke out against the two established authorities, the doctors and the Plunket Society. They wanted to share in deciding matters that concerned them—child-bearing and child-rearing—and challenged the view that the opinions of lay people in medical and health matters were of no value. Many women did not accept the attitude of conservative doctors towards birth control and resented having to fight to obtain information that seriously affected their lives. The recommended practices of the Plunket Society—scheduled feeding, bottle feeding, the charting of physical progress—were all criticised.

In 1946 a group was formed of young women who had in common the wish to plan their families. All had experienced difficulty in obtaining contraceptive advice. From this group grew the Christchurch branch of the Family Planning Association, some ten years after initial moves in Wellington. Members received support from Dr Eleanor Mears who enlisted the aid of Phyllis Zeff, an experienced family-planning worker recently arrived from England. The Association was careful to avoid confrontation with doctors or other groups and was not able to reach all the people it felt would benefit. At first it merely operated a referral service suggesting the names of doctors willing to offer birth control advice.

The first clinic, in Cashel Street, was opened in 1956. This was not welcomed by doctors and indeed almost everybody treated the F.P.A. with suspicion for a long time. There was a great amount of prejudice against it but the dignity and self-possession of leaders like Phyllis Zeff, Betty Stanley and others undoubtedly helped to overcome this. The Association now has good relations with both doctors and the Plunket Society.

At first only the diaphragm was fitted. Many committee members felt that the clinic doctors were too reluctant to prescribe "the pill" or to fit I.U.D.s. Also, it was some time before the clinic would give advice to unmarried women.



Although most of the workers in the clinic are now paid, the Family Planning Association is unwilling to lose the voluntary interest completely, as with it the personal touch might disappear. It is a tribute to the determination and concern of the Association's original members that Christchurch women have this valuable service.<sup>46</sup>

The chain of events leading to the establishment of the Parents' Centre in 1956 is in many ways similar to that of the Family Planning Clinic. Both groups had a core of concerned women working at first without the approval of the majority of doctors, but gradually gaining acceptance. In contrast to the relatively inexperienced but enthusiastic women of the Family Planning Association, those starting the Parents' Centre were outspoken women, well-educated and knowledgeable about working within "the System". Their first project was for parents to gain better access to their children in hospital. Nancy Sutherland, one of the city's best-known fighters for social causes, began the battle in 1947 by taking part in an unsuccessful deputation to the Hospital Board. Helen Holmes joined the fray in the early 1950s when she discovered that she could visit her daughter in hospital for only one hour a week. These women had sufficient faith in their own capabilities to stand up to the Board and present evidence of the bad effects of maternal separation. Eventually the Hospital Board allowed parents free access to their children, although there was some early antagonism from the nursing staff.<sup>47</sup>

In 1950 Nancy Sutherland wrote three articles for the *Press* condemning many child-rearing practices advocated by doctors and Plunket.<sup>48</sup> Those who agreed with these criticisms included Helen Brew (who later directed the television film "Birth") and Dr Enid Cooke, both involved in founding the Parents' Centre. They were concerned that a woman had little choice but to accept the drugs given to her during labour. They believed that the separation of mother and baby for up to three days after birth was unnecessary and harmful; the baby was deprived of maternal warmth and the mother's lactation was suppressed. The Plunket Society was criticized for issuing such rigid instructions to mothers for feeding their babies. Generally, these women believed that the mother's role was being manipulated by the experts.

In 1956 the Parents' Centre was formed as an incorporated society. Classes were offered in natural child-birth and child-rearing. The medical profession was never directly challenged; the Centre tried to avoid this by maintaining a rational and sensible



approach. Lectures were always conducted by appropriately qualified people. Nevertheless, some doctors still accused the Parents' Centre of spreading dangerous ideas. Centre leaders replied that doctors and Plunket were concerned with a baby's physical health only.<sup>49</sup>

In the 1970s women have formed groups with more specialized interests in health matters. Some are simply pressure groups, which have an accepted place in today's society.

La Leche League works in a quiet way on a personal level giving mothers encouragement to breastfeed their babies. Jenny Wybourne was inspired to form a Christchurch branch after receiving help from the parent branch when she was in Chicago. She qualified as a La Leche leader in 1968 and the first official meeting of a Christchurch branch was held in 1969. There are now eight branches of the League in Christchurch and they work with the approval of the Plunket Society. Mrs Wybourne stresses that La Leche does not offer medical advice but does make available medical research findings on breastfeeding in an attempt to revive this declining practice.<sup>50</sup>

The Christchurch branch of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) was formed after a public meeting in 1969, by about ten people who were concerned about the proposed liberalizing of the abortion law. Since then the Society has developed into a strong anti-abortion lobby. Membership includes many doctors.<sup>51</sup>

The Christchurch branch of the Abortion Law Reform Association of New Zealand (ALRANZ) was formed in 1971 in opposition to the aims of SPUC.<sup>52</sup> The introduction into Parliament of the Wall Bill in 1975 and the Gill Bill of 1976 has further polarized SPUC and ALRANZ and has brought the whole issue into continuing public debate.

## Social Welfare

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"EACH morning as the doors of the Magistrate's Court are opened people begin to straggle in, the timorous, here for the first time, the blustering shaggy lads, the lawyers, brisk and business-like, briefs tucked under their arms, the constables wearing an unnatural look of goodness, conscientiously checking their lists. At ten o'clock sharp the 'Sergeant Major' bawls 'Silence!' and in comes the Magistrate. He hardly deigns to notice the crowded public benches unless there is a disturbance, whereupon he frowns reprovingly. The lawyers plead their cases with verbose and silken tongue. The witness in the witness-box takes the oath, the defendant in the dock tells his story and it is often difficult to decide where the truth lies. There is a yell for the next defendant, called down the line by several policemen trying to look useful, and a craning of dark-hued necks among the unwashed at the back of the crowd."

So reads a description of a court session by an acute observer; it could apply to any day at court in the 1970s but was, in fact, written in the 1890s by Eveline Cunningham, a tireless worker for penal reform, a branch of social welfare in which some Canterbury women can be regarded as pioneers.

Eveline Cunningham arrived in Christchurch in 1875 as a young married woman, a product of an upper-middle-class family. She spent most of her life in Christchurch working for the betterment of conditions for women and children. Mrs Cunningham advocated many prison reforms: the training of warders and prison officials, the appointment of female inspectors for women's quarters; the improvement of physical conditions; the separation of first-time from habitual offenders; the provision of trade training for prisoners. Such suggestions brought little response. The authorities turned a deaf ear; the public was indifferent. She persevered, and eventually some renovations were carried out in Addington Prison with the help of paint and whitewash. Eveline Cunningham herself,

aided by her daughters and the prisoners, created a chapel within the prison.

Her work in the courts—cheering timid witnesses, protecting frightened children, finding homes for neglected girls—went on, and was inspired by her boundless love and concern for people, saints and sinners alike.

Appearance at court can still be a cause of trepidation. In 1970, a Christchurch woman, Mrs Pat Aitken, feeling that many people in court needed help and comfort, founded the Friends at Court Society. Working under the auspices of the Justice Department, the society is now winning the support of lawyers, police and magistrates, who accept the positive role that lay people can play in the administration of justice.

In the 1920s prisons were described as universities of crime maintained by the State, and places of "terrible moral infection and contamination". It was said that young people who were sent to prison for relatively small offences often came out fully educated for a lifetime of crime. First-offenders were put with hardened criminals; the treatment was the same for all.

In an age when it was considered scarcely decent for ladies to talk about "convicts", let alone help them, one woman fought to alleviate the plight of prisoners. Blanche Edith Baughan, like Eveline Cunningham, was a woman ahead of her time. Born in England in 1870, she graduated from the London University at the age of twenty-two with a Bachelor of Arts degree, in spite of opposition from her parents. A woman of independent means, she was interested in the suffragette movement and did social work in the East End of London before her passion for travel led her to New Zealand.

In Christchurch her concern for the underdog continued. In 1924, in the face of hostility and criticism, Miss Baughan founded the New Zealand Howard League for Penal Reform, and through all the early years of struggle she carried on with determination. At one time she even joined the staff of the Women's Reformatory at Addington in order to study prison problems from inside. She encouraged women with special qualities of understanding to visit the prisoners, to take an interest in individual cases, and simply to listen. Though not much loved by prison officials, her women visitors were welcomed by the inmates.

Edith Baughan was a fighter and had many clashes with authority in her campaign for penal reforms. Probation rather than imprisonment was her ideal.



During 1950 Mrs Ann Young, the Howard League representative on the National Council of Women, organised opposition to the re-introduction of capital punishment—a campaign that extended over a decade, ending with the abolition of hanging in 1961.

The women's prison at Paparua opened in 1974 is a well-appointed building and well run. Some would describe the conditions as luxurious. But Ann Young's opinion is that the place is too far removed from reality and that younger women and first-offenders would be better served living in an atmosphere more like that of their own homes, in satellite hostels run on the lines of the pre-release hostels. The prisons could be reserved for just the harder cases.

There have been many penal reforms since Eveline Cunningham first set foot inside a prison, but these reforms have not been easily won and much has still to be achieved.

Elizabeth Reid McCombs, after her election to the Christchurch City Council in 1921 and the North Canterbury Hospital Board in 1925, was able to effect some worthwhile improvements. Among her projects were public baths (very necessary at a time when many houses did not have a bathroom), and smaller pools for children in conjunction with swimming pools, also the formation of children's playgrounds, and the women's restroom and creche in Cathedral Square. While on the Hospital Board she worked for better conditions for nurses, free dental treatment, and for more scientific and hygienic food preparation. She was also active on the Benevolent Committee during the Depression, and in charge of the Citizens' Relief Depot which distributed groceries to families of unemployed men (a hundred orders a day during one period).

Mrs McCombs's career of public service culminated in her election in 1933 as New Zealand's first woman Member of Parliament, but it began long before at the turn of the century when, before her marriage, she initiated and became secretary of the Children's Aid Society, forerunner of the Society of Home and Family, and one of the earliest welfare organisations in New Zealand.

In 1936 Mrs Nan Gilmour Kent-Johnston, then living in Christchurch, was appointed to lead a committee of inquiry into maternity services in New Zealand. The committee visited every

maternity hospital, public and private. Those that were found to be below standard were later closed down.

Mrs Kent-Johnston, as a member of N.C.W., had earlier headed a deputation to the Minister of Health, Mr Fraser, to plead for a new obstetrical hospital in a central position in Christchurch. In the Depression she founded the Friends of St Helen's, calling on women from different organisations for help to see that every baby born had at least a modest layette. Although hospital service at St Helen's was free, all too often mothers could not afford to supply a stitch of clothing for their babies, and in many cases the nurses themselves had dipped into their own meagre savings to provide this. The Friends of St Helen's helped with clothing and gave home aid where necessary.

St Helen's Hospital, sited right on the streetline at a busy intersection, was eventually replaced by the Christchurch Women's Hospital.

In 1977 the Christchurch City Council approved in principle a Children's Bill of Rights, the first local authority to do so. This was the result of more than a year of hard work by a steering committee chaired by Councillor Nancy Sutherland. The committee presented a comprehensive report covering economic aspects, educational and family matters, health and social welfare, and the law. A number of women served with Nancy Sutherland on the committee: Katrine Brown, Carol Eggleston, Marian Logeman, Elaine Papps, Dr Noeline Walker and Dr Robyn Hewland.

It was the intention of the committee to examine the status of New Zealand children in relation to the ten principles of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child. The sobering conclusion reached was that the principles of the Declaration are more honoured in the breach than in the observance in New Zealand. There are "inconsistencies in the law—and injustices as the law affects children," said the report. It went on to say that in New Zealand "children's rights are *not* paramount, nor are they always protected. This is obvious in juvenile courts; in adoption and fostering procedures; as well as in day-care and in inheritance matters. The rights of handicapped children, children of divorced or separated parents, neglected children, and those under the authority of schools, hospitals and other institutions are abrogated or denied in varying degrees." The report recommended the setting up of a permanent Ministry for Children to deal with such matters.

While the Christchurch City Council accepted the report, is working towards the establishment of a Child Study Centre, and supports the International Year of the Child, the Municipal Association in 1977 discussed but did not adopt the report.

Nancy Sutherland has long been a worker for children's rights. She was one who fought for better parental access to children in hospital in the 1950s. In 1971 after election to the City Council she became chairman of the new Welfare Committee and has spoken on the need for free day-care centres.

The Member of Parliament for Southern Maori, Whetu Tiri-katene-Sullivan, raised the issue of children's rights in the House in 1977 when the Human Rights Commission was being debated, and was assured by the Minister of Justice that the commission would have the authority to initiate and encourage children's rights programmes.

In these days of a seemingly comprehensive social welfare system there still appears to be scope for the woman who is interested in voluntary community service among those who are, even temporarily, rebuffed by society. Christchurch women tread paths worn by women elsewhere as they try to find and help those in need: the solo parent, the battered wife, the lonely elderly, and the drifting adolescent.

The homeless teenager—perhaps a school dropout, usually jobless or a job drifter, often under-educated and socially handicapped—found a home at "6A" in Christchurch. Largely through the efforts of Mrs Katrine Brown who, in 1971 carried out a survey for the Y.W.C.A. on the needs of youth in Christchurch, 6A was established to provide a place where young people could find acceptance, encouragement, trust and stability. Katrine Brown, now part of a team of volunteer workers, helped the arrivals, mostly young Maoris and Polynesians, with the practicalities of city life—how to find a job and a place to live—and, if needed, gave support in the courts. Later 6A merged with another organisation for Maori youth, Te Rau Aroha; the trust relies on subsidies, grants and donations for its work among young people.

In 1951 the North Canterbury Centre of the Red Cross began a service taking hot meals to the aged in the city. When it began, six bottles of soup were distributed; the meat was given by a local butcher, the cookers by the Gas Company and the "dixies" were borrowed from the Army. This was the first service of its kind in New Zealand. Mrs Dorothy Jenner Wales and Miss



Margaret Mariner Clark Bain were on the original committee which devised the scheme. Many women have since given countless hours of voluntary service in cooking, packing and delivering meals. A *Star* report of February 1972, for instance, described how ninety-year-old Mrs Agnes Hiatt, with her driver, Mrs W. S. MacGibbon, had made deliveries for twenty years.

Since 1974 the meals have been prepared in the hospital kitchens. The present Red Cross liaison officer for "Meals on Wheels" is Mrs Nola McConnell, who succeeded Miss Peggy Bruce and Miss Bain. These days some 650 meals are delivered by the rostered 550 drivers and their helpers. Off-duty air hostesses are among those who offer their services, but most of the drivers are in the retired age group and some enrol their husbands as enthusiastic and reliable helpers.

Some social welfare work is directed towards preventing social problems, and among the groups that work to this end are the Family Planning Association and the Marriage Guidance Council. Now thoroughly respectable, even "establishment", both bodies when they began in Christchurch in the early 1950s had to overcome considerable resistance. Both were inspired by overseas example and were among the first to be established in New Zealand.

The Family Planning Association began in Christchurch when Dr Eleanor Mears and Phyllis Zeff added their experience of the movement in England to the efforts of enthusiastic local women. Among the workers in "the early days" were Joy and Betty Chaston, Bet Stanley, Helen Wiley, Marie Griffin and Norma Hampton. They had to raise money, to enlist the support of influential people, and overcome scepticism and even hostility. The first clinic was opened in Cashel Street in 1956. The Family Planning Association has now spacious and attractive rooms in the Christchurch Arts Centre, enjoys patronage from civic leaders, and receives subsidies from the state. When Phyllis Zeff was elected to the North Canterbury Hospital Board any matter to do with family planning was referred to her in the way of a hearty joke. As a contrast today, the principles of family planning are an accepted part of the curriculum of medical training. One can only guess at the amount of human suffering that has been avoided by this social revolution.

The Marriage Guidance Council was also established in Christchurch in the early 1950s. The first full time director was Eileen Saunders who was appointed in 1969. The Marriage Guidance

Council in Christchurch benefited from the early public support given by the Bishop of Christchurch, the Right Reverend A. K. Warren and his wife. In 1955 forty-six new cases were handled by the volunteer counsellors, and a series of lecture-discussions was arranged for those about to be married. By 1974 when Mrs Saunders resigned, the Domestic Proceedings Act of 1968, which incorporated court-ordered conciliation, had been in part responsible for the jump in cases from 124 in 1963 to 1200 ten years later. Marriage guidance is now accepted as a valuable part of social welfare.

This history would not be complete without acknowledgment of the contribution made by women of the churches. Most denominations are represented on the N.C.W. and on the various welfare bodies, including the Aged People's Welfare Council, and as individual churches play their part in preventing and alleviating distress.

Both the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches have women in religious orders. The first Roman Catholic order, the Sacre Coeur, began at Timaru in 1880, and there are now a number of orders covering many different types of service. Some Roman Catholic nuns have gone to live with and work for the people in Aranui, and on several occasions they have spoken out in support of those suffering from bureaucratic injustice. An Anglican order, the Community of the Sacred Name, was founded in Christchurch in 1893, with the arrival of Sister Edith from London; the Sisters' work includes teaching, nursing, and visiting homes and prisons.

At the turn of the century the Methodist Deaconesses' order developed. In 1900 a small house in Barbadoes Street became the first training house and a national training centre. Deaconesses served among the Maori people as teachers and nurses before the days of the district nurse, and acted as visitors, counsellors and almoners among the poor. A direct outcome of the movement was the establishment in 1914 of the Methodist Children's Home in Harewood Road. The name of Sister Mabel Morley stands out both for her work as Lady Superintendent of the training centre and in the Children's Home. Since 1951 Sister Rona Colling has worked with the children.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church is expanding its voluntary work in health and civil defence, and has volunteers as well as professionals in its Christchurch health clinic.

Today changes are evident in the kind of social services offered

by the churches and by churchwomen. A trained counsellor/psychiatrist is often employed full-time. Suitable women volunteers may be accepted for training as part-time counsellors, to work with families under stress. Women volunteers also staff clothing shops run by the various denominations, and work with the aged and frail in their own homes, sometimes in conjunction with professional workers from the Nurse Maude Association.

Canterbury women, like those elsewhere, have not been content merely to talk about social problems but have rolled up their sleeves and given help in practical ways—by working with prisoners, by scrubbing floors, by visiting the needy, by making soup, by sewing clothes, and by dipping into their own pockets.

Two Christchurch women who epitomise this contribution to society are Mrs Mary Moodie of Sumner and Mrs Louise Miles of Littleacre, Huntsbury. These women have been foster-mothers to hundreds of children, many of them handicapped physically or emotionally, many of them mentally retarded, children whose parents could not cope with the special care required by a handicapped child. Both Mrs Moodie and Mrs Miles have the gift of making such children feel secure and happy, and have expressed their love of humanity in lifetimes of service.



## Women at Home

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THE house is only the shell which contains the home, but to any woman the fabric of her house, its amenities and its environment, are very important. Naturally, the size and elegance of colonial houses and the area of the grounds proclaimed the prosperity of the owner. In an average five or six-roomed house all the rooms had open fires, and the kitchen, scullery and pantry were separate. The washhouse was some distance from the main building, with a "little house" even farther away. Furniture was solid and large, and curtains and upholstery were heavy and difficult to clean. Large expanses of floor needed constant polishing; kitchen-tables, wooden benches and doorsteps needed constant scouring; brass doorsteps and bells needed constant polishing; ranges and grates had to be black-leaded. Very little mechanical help was available for the multiplicity of monotonous tasks. Double-beds were found in most bedrooms; they represented an economy in space and linen in a period when large families made necessary the sharing of a bedroom by several sisters or brothers.

Oil lamps and candles may look romantic but maintenance of lamps was very time-consuming. In Christchurch, by 1890, domestic gas lighting was relatively common and it gave way gradually to electricity after the Lake Coleridge station was opened in 1915.

By 1890 cold water was laid on in most city houses. Readily available artesian water allowed people in the outlying suburbs to install their individual water pumps—the ram was a very common method. Hot water had to be manhandled; many kitchen ranges provided hot water in a tank beside the oven.

Weatherboard houses are still common in Canterbury but various kinds of concrete blocks are now increasingly used. Emphasis today is laid on sunlight, fresh air and the economical use of space. Functional and "easy-clean" surfaces on walls, floors and work-benches, drip-dry fabrics, and electrical household

equipment combine to simplify and speed up domestic work. The history of the family wash is, to some extent, an epitome of all household developments. Once housekeeping was a very disciplined matter and Monday was always washing day. Very early in the morning the copper had to be lit to supply hot water. All the "whites"—sheets, pillow-cases, towels, tableclothes and napkins—were boiled, rinsed several times, blued, starched, wrung by hand-wringer and hung on long lines, which were heaved into the breeze with wooden clothes-props. Woollens and "coloureds" had to be dealt with separately. There was a most distinctive washhouse smell—a compound of soap, wooden tubs and copper fires.

By 1890 housewives could buy their soap in long bars but many women in town and country made their own soap till a much later date. Since large quantities of hot water were hard to produce, washing was usually followed by "scrubbing through", when the main wooden surfaces were scoured in kitchens, sculleries and porches—no wonder Monday's meals were traditionally somewhat makeshift.

Tuesday was traditionally ironing day. Since most irons were heated on the kitchen stove this was a hot and wearisome job. Solid flat-irons were succeeded by models with removable handles, but all were cumbersome and made slow work of starched or heavily embroidered articles. Often gophering-irons had to be used for tiny pleats and ruffles. The constant heat of the stove made airing easy. Racks were raised by pulleys to the ceilings of most kitchens.

Experiments with washing-machines did not make much progress till the driving power of electricity was available. The first machines were all of the agitator type. The iron has advanced from petrol types to simple electric models which have now been superseded by heat-controlled steam irons. Fast colours and easy-care materials have taken much of the boredom from laundry work.

The coal-range, noted for even controllable heat, was gradually replaced by the gas stove, but gas was ousted by electricity for both domestic and street lighting in the 1920s. Gradually through the 'thirties the "all-electric house" became a catchword. A few private generating-plants continue to supply inaccessible home-steads; otherwise reticulation of electricity is complete through Canterbury.

Electricity has been a great emancipator, but a number of housewives of the pre-electricity era still remember with gratitude the labour-saving properties of the O'Cedar Mop which appeared in 1918. This early version of the oil-impregnated mop was revolutionary in houses where mats were merely islands in seas of polished floor and where carpet-squares were surrounded by broad polished margins.

For Sale advertisements before 1914 regularly stressed the advantage, "on sewer". As plumbing improved the "little house" down the garden moved closer to the back door, then into the back part of the house, finally to its convenient place in the modern bathroom or as separate "toilet". However, the nightman still calls in a few places in Canterbury. Sets of old bedroom china fetch high prices as novelties today, but little imagination is needed to recognise the unpleasant and heavy work they once involved.

High land values and changing ways of life have led to the proliferation of flats; fewer home-builders today can afford the quarter-acre section once considered desirable for family independence and privacy. Christchurch people have always been accomplished gardeners but in these days of widely varied leisure activities most favour smaller sections.

Some successful communes have been established in Canterbury. Wainoni, described in detail by R. M. Burdon in his book *Scholar Errant*, was the brainchild of Professor Bickerton — a prominent and controversial figure in Christchurch at the turn of the century. Bickerton experimented with houses of wooden frames covered in brown paper, thickly tarred and sanded on both sides; the cost was a fifth the price of wood, only unskilled labour was needed, and he claimed that the finished houses were warm and weatherproof. In 1899 the commune was established with thirty members, but Bickerton estimated that a hundred were necessary for the success of the scheme. All domestic work was done co-operatively and most members had outside occupations.

In the 1890s life-expectancy for women in New Zealand was just over fifty-seven; it has risen gradually to approximately seventy-five. Up to the First World War the death rate for young people, particularly infants, was tragically high. The newspapers of the time, and tombstones in local cemeteries, confirm this. Christchurch for several years had the worst record in the country, with 1898 and 1907 being particularly bad years. Because going to hospital was avoided if possible, women assumed great responsibility for nursing. Not only did they have to face killer diseases



such as pneumonia, typhoid, diphtheria and tuberculosis, but the diseases of childhood could also be very serious. There are many records of women going into voluntary isolation so that a sick child would not have to go to the infectious diseases hospital. As well as all this, older members of the family living in the household had to be cared for and many women shouldered a big share of geriatric nursing. Help in the house was, however, readily available; older daughters in large families, spinster dependants, and active grandmothers all did their share.

Newspaper advertisements for patent medicines of the early days are a fascinating study; to people in the 1970s, accustomed to scientific diagnosis by doctors with recourse to sophisticated instruments and techniques, potions and pills which promised to cure every ill are hard to take seriously, but in our own way we are just as gullible today. Another change in viewpoint is shown by a 1918 advertisement for cod liver oil which extolled "the beauty of plumpness"! The tobacco industry's efforts in the early 'thirties to popularise smoking among women were characterised by photographs of beautiful girls above such slogans as "Smoke so-and-so's! They're good for you!" At least the beautiful girls remain in many cigarette advertisements today.

Women's ready-made clothing was advertised regularly in local papers by 1890. Some of the prominent advertisers are still in business today. For reasons of economy and habit, the change to ready-made clothing was gradual. Fabrics, techniques and fashions led to an almost complete take-over of the underwear market, but the importance of the home dressmaker can still be seen from the wide range of patterns, fabrics and trimmings readily available today. One milestone in women's fashions was the "bra" — a useful garment appearing under its full name of brassière about 1915. It pointed the way towards the functional but less restrictive underclothes preferred by women today. Rigid corsets, beribboned camisoles, combinations, voluminous bloomers and substantial petticoats have disappeared for ever — unless some quirk of fashion should demand their reappearance.

The change from days when women and even small girls always had their heads covered out-of-doors is now almost complete. In the fashionable wardrobe, hats once held a very important place. Fashion notes in the daily papers gave full descriptions of London or Paris models appearing at races, weddings and garden-parties. The humbler woman would often buy a new hat for a special occasion, relying on it to attract attention from general shabbiness.

From 1890 to 1920 were years of transition when women were beginning to find places in industry and commerce. Teaching and nursing have long been regarded as suitable careers for women, but domestic employment has never really attracted New Zealand women, and since 1935 domestic workers have always been in short supply. In fact, shortage of domestic help, particularly in cases of emergency, became a community problem and attempts were made to raise the status of domestic service. In 1918 Dr A. B. O'Brien, who held very strong opinions about the burdens carried by housewives, unsuccessfully urged the establishment of a state scheme with adequate training. A training hostel was planned in 1937, with premises in Worcester Street, but failed through shortage of applications. At about the same time, ten women's organisations combined in a Household Service Campaign, but this also came to nothing.

At Stratheona, near Pleasant Point in South Canterbury, in 1939, the Women's Division of the Farmers' Union gave suitable girls, about seventeen years of age, twelve months' practical training in domestic science. The training was excellent but losses through marriage were inevitable. An emergency scheme for help in times of sickness and accident was started in 1929 by the Christchurch Home Service Association, and housekeeper services were established for country women. In 1943 two schemes for emergency domestic help were put forward, one by the Plunket Society, the other by the Canterbury Housewives' Union. Both hoped for state support and proposed training and defined conditions of work. Out of these developed the Home Aid Scheme.

The Canterbury Housewives' Union was very active from 1941 till it went into recess in 1958. As a result of a petition to the Tramway Board about 1942 hooks for prams were placed in front of the Board's vehicles. Members supported jury service for women and equal pay for equal work. They established day nurseries for working mothers and petitioned the Government on the subject of the cost of living. They gave evidence before consultative committees — for instance the one on hospital reform in 1953. Altogether this was a most effective organisation.

Poverty still oppresses certain Canterbury women — some pensioners, solo-mothers, and other women with personal difficulties walk a tightrope in their financial affairs. But no woman today faces the destitution which was far too common when social legislation was inadequate. For forty years few changes were made





### CHRISTCHURCH WOMEN LEARNING TELEGRAPHY, 1916

Wartime manpower shortages brought women into new and interesting occupations.



### THE FIRST WOMEN POLICE, 1941

*Back:* Lynn Brockett (Canterbury), Nan Aitchison, Vera McConchie (Canterbury), Lina Smith, May Berridge, Margaret Holder. *Front:* Edna Pearce (Canterbury), Eileen O'Connor, Police Instructor, Molly Spearman, May Callagan.





#### THE WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION TUAHIWI BRANCH, 1908

It was claimed to be the first Maori branch in the South Island and was probably the first Maori women's organisation. According to the *Weekly Press*, the group includes "Mesdames Te Aika and W. H. Uru, the latter secretary of the branch, and Miss Hera Stirling, the well-known Maori missionary". A popular touring singer, Miss Stirling is best remembered for the song "Waiata Poi" which Alfred Hill wrote for her; all her life she fought the liquor trade.



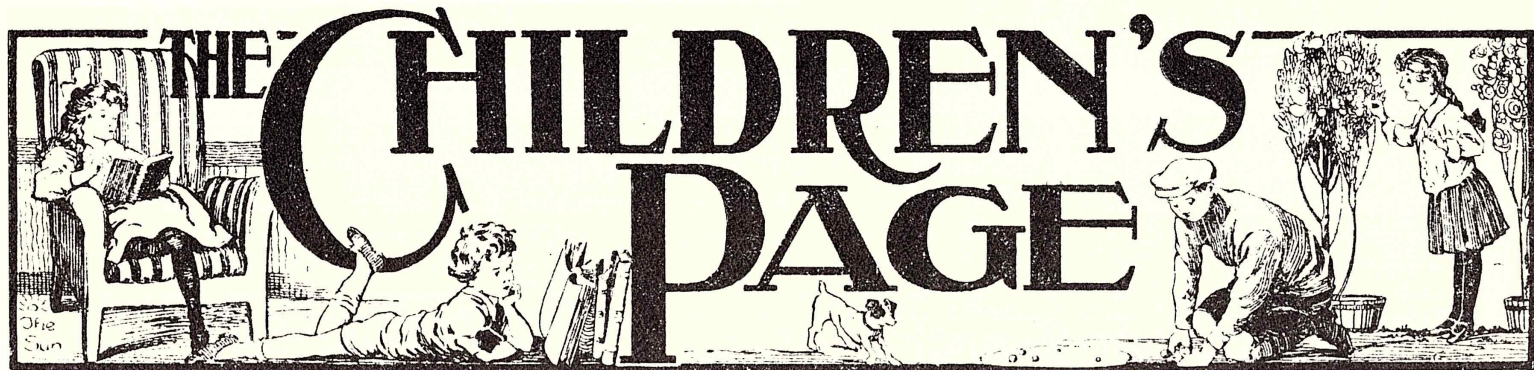


GIRLS OF TE WAI POUNAMU SCHOOL, 1930s  
They are photographed on the porch of the chapel.



**“CHRISTCHURCH ATTACKING THE DUNEDIN GOAL”**

A hockey game at Elmwood in 1900. Dunedin won. But a week later Christchurch, captained by Violet Campbell, was runner-up in the national tournament.



## AT THE JOLLIEST CAMP EVER

"THE HOME OF THE HAPPY HEART."

ON THE HILLS OF DIAMOND HARBOUR.

THERE WAS "NOTHING TO MAR OUR JOY."

Two years ago girls and boys of the S.B.F. commenced to write to the Children's and Shipmates' Pages. One year ago they held their first gathering, the Sunbeam picnic of 1923. This Easter they have gone a big step further. The best attendants at the monthly gatherings of the Shipmates' Pleasure Circles (Hill-Climbers and Boaters) went into camp and spent five gloriously happy days together at Diamond Harbour. Below are given full details of the Easter programme, and since the Big Sister and Pilot Scatterjoy have been kept busy keeping everything running smoothly at

Lyons for jams; to Mr Wells for use of row-boat; to Mr Lyons for loan of cricket set; to Mrs Payne for offer to store goods when strike came; to Mr Millar, for invaluable help in getting transport over the Summer-Lyttelton hill during strike period; to Mr and Mrs Stevenson, for innumerable kindnesses; to Mr and Mrs Van Asch, for permission to have campfires; to Mr Gardiner (Purau), for milk and walnuts on the day of the hare-chase.

### ALL MEALS AL FRESCO.

Everybody had certain duties. The scene immediately after breakfast was that of a busy hive of girls and boys hastening to get through their various tasks before inspection by the chaperons at 9.30 a.m. Through the great kindness of Mr and Mrs Stevenson at the store (situated immediately below the Home of the Happy Heart), the campers took breakfast and tea in the pretty Dutch garden kiosk. The meal there over, both at morning and evening, the wooden tables were scrubbed snow-white by the saloon stewards for the day. The scramble, by the way, when the breakfast and dinner bells rang was amusing, for the hungry, happy flock hastened to the kiosk, each 'Mate grasping cup, knife, fork, spoon, two of the mess-sergeants having previously set out on the newspaper table-

## THE CAMP MENU.

### PLENTY OF "EATS."

(Which, because of the parents' generosity in the matter of supplies, was not a bit like a camp menu.)

#### THURSDAY.

(1st contingent arrived at camp at 6.45 p.m.)

Tea.—Cold loin of lamb. Sauce, Bread and butter. Biscuits. Honey, Cocoa.

(2nd contingent arrived at 10.15 p.m., and had)

Supper.—Pressed beef and corned beef sandwiches, and cocoa.

#### GOOD FRIDAY.

Breakfast.—Pork sausages, Hot cross buns, Bread and butter, Jams, Tea and cocoa.

Hamper Lunch (in camp grounds).—Sandwiches, cakes, biscuits, nutbread, tea.

Dinner.—Cold chickens, rabbit, pressed tongue, tomato relish, potatoes baked in their jackets. Apple and jam tarts and custard sauce.

#### SATURDAY.



to the Old Age Pension of five shillings a week which was established in 1898. The child allowance introduced in 1926 applied only to the third child. The local body responsible for helping the poor was the Ashburton and North Canterbury Charitable Aid Board (1885), which had close associations with the Hospital Board. It established the Jubilee Home for old people and the Female Refuge in Linwood — a wretched name for what is now the Essex Maternity Hospital. On the whole the Aid Board did not have a happy record; the stigma of charity unsympathetically or tactlessly proffered too often surrounded its activities. The 1909 and 1910 Amendments to the Hospital and Charitable Institutions Act (1885) combined the functions of the hospital and charitable aid under one board. So the North Canterbury Hospital Board united the responsibilities of the Aid Board with its own work.

In 1896 Nurse Maude resigned as Matron of Christchurch Hospital and began her district nursing scheme. Her reports and those of her nurses give an authentic picture of the poor homes of the time. They described houses often little better than hovels. Fresh air, especially night air, was regarded as dangerous; cleanliness of surroundings and person was neglected — taking a bath was a rare experience; few attempts were made to prevent infection — indeed, a fatalistic outlook on disease often enough led to tragic apathy.

The worst years were those of the economic depressions of the 'twenties and the 'thirties. Unemployment reached alarming levels — it is thought now to have been about 80,000 at the depth of the Great Depression, or about twelve per cent. When hitherto prosperous families found themselves in seriously straitened circumstances, conditions among the poor can well be imagined. Acceptance of aid was regarded as humiliation by independent women, but in spite of prolonged sacrifices it gradually became quite unavoidable. By June 1932 it was estimated that in Christchurch alone there were over two thousand families — with four to five thousand children — who desperately needed help. In the country, where food and fuel were more easily obtained, conditions were a little easier. The Government introduced relief measures, which were applied nationally, but liaison among the various local committees was often insufficient. The churches, doctors, nurses and other organisations and individuals tried to identify deserving women who through shame at their plight refused to ask for aid; schoolmasters, for instance,

reported children without adequate footwear. These were harsh years of struggle, with a particular agony for women.

In the early years of the century isolation was the accepted lot of the country woman. Farms were situated too far apart for frequent visiting but nevertheless a great sense of neighbourliness and mutual help developed in these scattered communities. Women intruded very little into affairs reserved for men — even less so than in the towns — but any woman of strong character could become very powerful in her own sphere. *Littledene*, H. C. D. Somerset's classic study of Canterbury farming life in 1938, describes conditions in those times. Even into the 'thirties only one farmhouse in five had a bathroom, and rainwater tanks and back-yard pumps were common. Electric-light was fairly common but electricity was seldom used for household equipment (W. T. Doig's complaint — in "Standards of Life in N.Z. Dairy Farms, 1940" — that electricity was installed in the cowshed before it was connected to the house does not seem to have applied in Canterbury.) Even when "labour-saving devices" became available, the housewife did not command a high priority and motor-car, telephone and radio usually took precedence over modern stove and washing-machine.

Cooking used to be a marathon affair in farm homesteads. Meat was often served three times a day, and morning and afternoon teas were full meals. Extra men had to be fed at busy seasons, when numerous seasonal workers were employed.

Criticisms of country women began early — they were not using their potential ability, they had become slaves to their homes, intellectual pursuits were neglected, books in farmhouses were few and far between, interest in the arts was negligible. A 1973 follow-up to *Littledene* shows a general broadening of outlook over the thirty-five years, made possible by a reduction in drudgery. The winds of change have blown from many directions. The benefits of electricity, in particular, to the country housewife are inestimable — especially refrigeration and deep-freezing, which have revolutionised food preserving and allowed much greater variety of diet. Specialised gadgets now speed up many domestic tasks. The countrywoman has more time for other things, but she must be highly skilled in all branches of household management.

After the Second World War many enthusiastic young married women went on to the land. They benefited from good years, particularly in the early 'fifties, and some spectacular advances were made. Today the young countrywoman is often much better

educated than her mother was. Her experience is wider; she has usually had training beyond the secondary school level. Once her children are at school she has considerable freedom from household chores. Many women give their husbands practical help with the farmwork, they keep farm records and assist with home maintenance and gardening. They use leisure time for sport, study and hobbies, and serve their community in varied capacities.

Extremes of weather, the unpredictable behaviour of snow-fed rivers, the danger of sudden emergency still conspire to make isolation an important factor for women on Canterbury's high-country stations. Here, too, help has been given by technological advances — electricity, radio-telephone, better roads and vehicles, and aircraft. A certain air of romance still surrounds these stations, for the majesty of their settings and the sheer size of the properties. High-country women need to be strong in character and determination. It is interesting to see how much they value the Correspondence School and how much they contribute to it; much is still demanded of the mother, but the expertly prepared assignments and radio lessons, plus occasional opportunities for pupils and teachers to meet, make possible a sound primary education at home; even if secondary education usually means separation at boarding-school.

Electricity and the telephone, better education, professional training or work experience before marriage, good roads and fast reliable cars, all these have combined to close the gulf which once existed between townswoman and countrywoman.

Housewifely concerns dominated the life of the good wife and mother in the early twentieth century. The vote acquired by women in 1893 was a milestone, but it did not affect the average woman much. The Church and activities associated with it played a more important part in family life than they do today. Friendship with immediate neighbours was a natural consequence of comparative immobility. Local papers once carried regular reports of formal entertainments — garden parties, boating and tennis parties. Women of social status had "At Home" days, and visiting-cards, which were subject to strict rules, were regularly used.

Radio, in the experimental stages at the end of World War I, developed very quickly, to be almost universal in the middle 'thirties. There were gibes at the "empty-minded" housewife for her addiction to unending soap-operas such as "Dr Paul". People laughed more kindly at Aunt Daisy and the basic good sense of her



regular sessions was appreciated by many women, especially through the war years.

In 1951 approximately ten per cent of New Zealand women had jobs outside their homes. That figure rose to thirty-two per cent in 1971, and is still climbing.

Fewer women seem to have drunk liquor regularly before the Second World War. Five per cent of alcoholics were women at the beginning of the century; this has now risen to twenty-five per cent. A 1971 drug survey suggested that of all groups in society, married women are the most consistent users of sleeping-pills and tranquillisers.

The young woman today, like her great-grandmother, marries early. Well-educated, she commands well-paid and interesting jobs. She can control the number and spacing of her children but has to face financial sacrifice to care for them. The drudgery has gone from housework. Her husband may help but he is often not available when she really needs that extra pair of hands on which earlier generations could call. The paths along which women have moved since 1890 have become increasingly diverse. Younger women then were beginning to look longingly beyond the accepted roles of housewife, unmarried daughter at home and dependent relative. The roles women can play today are numerous, some of them cutting across the morality of earlier times. Titles of articles published in the *New Zealand Listener* in the 'forties suggest the trend: "New Deal for the Housewife", "Income for Wives", "Prison without Bars"; a 1959 article enquired, "Housewives or Human Beings?"

An article in the *Weekly Press* of June 1890 commented: "A great majority of the ablest women are wholly dissatisfied with their own position as women — but have no real plan to propose for the future of women as a sex." Would a contemporary journalist's remarks about housewives of the 'seventies be much different?

## Women and Education

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IN 1893, when women received the vote, many women's associations fighting for social and intellectual equality with men thought their work was nearing completion. The National Council of Women which was formed to consolidate the position of women believed that it was now through education that sex discrimination would end.

In 1873 Canterbury University College had been established, and just four years later the Christchurch Girls' High School, followed in 1884 by Timaru Girls' High. These schools were founded to educate to high academic standards pupils who would be able to take their places as students at University. This they did; Helen Connon, while a teacher at Christchurch Girls' High, became the first woman in the British Empire to win Honours in English and Latin (1881). She was followed by other brilliant academic women: Kate Edger, Beatrice Gibson, Margaret Lorimer — all three later to become principals of Nelson College for Girls.

Many women entered teaching, where their aim was to produce gentlewomen with scholars' interests and abilities. They took as their standards those of boys' public schools in England, and tried to obtain for girls the advantages which boys had in their curricula. Some principals who realised these ideals were Mary Victoria Gibson of Christchurch Girls' High, Margaret Mary Hickey (Sister Mary Domitille) of Sacred Heart College, Janet Barr of Timaru Girls' High, and later Kathleen Gresson of Avon-side Girls' High School. These women were to leave a lasting impression on their pupils. Schools were small, so that principals and pupils could know each other well. They came from the same social group, families who valued education for women.

From the days of the First World War some women were to gain positions on the University staff: Elizabeth Herriot in 1916 (biology), Alice Candy in 1921 (history), and Rata Lovell Smith

at the School of Art in 1928. Helen Simpson, who had taken a doctorate in England, held a lectureship in the English department. In the 'thirties, four women were appointed lecturers, another five in the 'forties, four in the 'fifties; but with the increased rolls in the 'sixties and perhaps, too, greater awareness of the part women were playing in the world, twenty were appointed. In recent years most women appointees have held junior positions in their departments, but there have been exceptions and a few senior lecturers have been appointed; Marion Steven became a reader in Classics in 1966, and Jane Soons Professor of Geography in 1971.

Some women studied ways to help those less fortunate than themselves in gaining education. Among them was Eveline Cunnington, one of the founders of the National Council for Women. Eveline Cunnington realised how little education many workers had. She believed in social justice for all and as she was an excellent public speaker she often expressed her views at public meetings. Number 39 Papanui Road, the home of the Cunningtons, became a meeting place for Socialists, members of the Fabian Society and young women who came to discuss the issues of the day.

At one of the meetings it was decided to set up in Christchurch courses for workers similar to those in Australia. Eveline Cunnington arranged for the secretary of the New South Wales W.E.A. to organise such classes here. Although ill-health forced her to retire from public life shortly after, she lived long enough to see her scheme come to fruition in 1915.

In the following years the W.E.A. prospered. The Christchurch City Council provided a permanent lecture room at 102 Hereford Street for the W.E.A., a few citizens provided monetary assistance and the staff of Canterbury College offered their services. The first tutorials held in economics and psychology attracted only one woman, and for some years women were in a minority, for probably the three-year courses had little appeal for them. But in 1919 Professor James Shelley arrived from England to take up a post at the University; soon he was lecturing at the W.E.A. and his lectures on modern drama drew large numbers, including many women. Giving evidence before a commission, Professor Stewart described the W.E.A. as a group serving among others "cultured and semi-cultured ladies and people of that type".

The Summer Schools that were held in the early days by Professor James Shelley, and John Condliffe from the economics



department, attracted a large number of women, often up to two-thirds of the group. Was it, as early reports suggest, because women had more free time than men, or were they more conscientious and more anxious to learn? Women teachers made up the largest group attending, but they were joined by shop-girls, dressmakers, factory hands, housewives and business-girls; only the society girl was absent. Although Eveline Cunnington helped to found the movement, many years were to pass before a woman was elected to the executive committee; in 1969 Joan Ryan was elected president for a three-year term.

At the turn of the century Christchurch was noted for its small private schools. Miss Loehse began a school which was later taken over by Mrs Crosdaile Bowen and became the forerunner of St Margaret's College. Mrs Soulsby, and her daughter Mrs Thompson, and the two Misses Sanders, Mrs Crosby and Mrs Coleman, all had their own schools, while Mrs Freeman conducted a branch of Dunedin's Girton College in Latimer Square, and the Misses Gibson opened their school in Papanui. Miss Ross and Miss Cormack conducted small preparatory schools for boys and girls, and Miss Monica Lawrence ran her small school in Fendalton. These schools flourished until the turn of the century, only St Margaret's College and the school begun by the Misses Gibson, Rangi Ruru School, surviving today.

Over the years some infant and primary teachers were noted for their innovations and the achievements in their schools: Kate Kiver, Principal of St Michael's Primary School for thirty-five years; Isabel Jamieson, from Scotland, who began a class at the Normal School for the deprived and handicapped child; Dorothy Basten, who on her arrival from England in 1929 joined the staff at the Normal School. Here she made revolutionary changes in the infant department, not only in the teaching of reading, but in the conduct of the classroom. Freedom was her watchword. Discipline, she would say, must be easy and free — not free and easy. All children in her classes were kept very busy. Another notable teacher was Miss Marjorie Archey (Mrs Armstrong) who, having worked with both Miss Basten and Miss Jamieson, established the Special Handicapped Children's class at Waimairi School. Later Mrs Armstrong went to Redcliffs School, teaching over fifty pupils from primers two to four.

In primary schools, girls were given the same education as boys. Under the 1877 Education Act primary education was made free and compulsory for all boys and girls. They were taught together

although up to the nineteen-thirties there was still segregation in some playgrounds and woe betide any boy or girl seen talking through the fence!

Early in the century two schools were opened to give wider opportunities for higher education. West Christchurch District High School, opened in 1904, was not intended to compete with the other high schools but to give secondary education to the workingman's child. Co-education was part of the experiment, but the girls were strictly disciplined by Miss E. A. Chaplin and her successor Miss A. C. Finlayson. The sexes were segregated until pupils reached the fifth form. They were kept apart in the playground also, the corrugated-iron fence and invisible barriers across the front playground regularly patrolled by staff. The school had only two courses, commercial and literary, the latter being anything which was not in the straight commercial course. This "middle of the road" school lasted thus only until 1935, when like the other high schools it was put under the control of the Canterbury University College Board of Governors, which provided better staffing, courses and equipment.

Christchurch Technical College was founded in 1906 to provide technical education for boys after passing the sixth standard and before entering more advanced classes at Canterbury College. No mention was made of girls' technical subjects, or of Elizabeth Milne Gardner, a woman who was to gain recognition for what came to be called later the Home Life Course. Elizabeth Gardner was born in Sweden and from the Scandinavian countries gained an appreciation of the worth of skill in the domestic arts. In 1895 she was invited to become the Principal of the Christchurch School of Domestic Science Instruction; the name was pretentious for the school was in a barren rat-infested warehouse in Hobbs Buildings in Lichfield Street and then later in the old Congregational Schoolroom in Manchester Street. In 1906 the School of Domestic Science Instruction was handed over to the Technical College, with Mrs Gardner the head of the home science department. Here she taught primary school girls, older girls from the Technical College, and other secondary pupils, and trained student-teachers in the art of cooking, dressmaking, millinery and needlework; her great success was in gaining the Girls' Training Hostel in Ensors Road where the girls received training that would make them fit for housework of any kind. Here Elizabeth Gardner was to remain Principal until ill-health forced her to resign in 1916. She died in 1926, a pioneer in housecraft education.

The Depression of the 'thirties called attention to the unenviable position of many girls. When money was short, girls were expected to leave school early and go into domestic service or low-paid factory or shop-assistant jobs. Most families thought it more important for a boy to be given a good education. Some girls managed to attend mainly evening classes, either at the Christchurch Technical College or at private commercial schools run by the Gilbeys, by Miss Archer, and by Misses Maud and Una Digby. These schools had their heyday in the 1930s and '40s but with the retirement of their principals they had mostly closed by the '60s. The Christchurch Technical Institute took over their work, although recently Margaret Ritchie has established another successful private commercial college.

Christobel Robinson was one who worked hard in the 1930s to see great changes made in education not only for girls but for those who needed a special kind of education. During the Depression she was introduced to Vocational Guidance while she was teaching at the Christchurch Technical College; she met Max Keys who was giving advice on careers to unemployed boys at the Y.M.C.A. He suggested that she might like to do similar work for girls. Christobel Robinson began working from the boardroom of the Y.M.C.A. and in 1934 when the Mayor, D. G. Sullivan, established a Girls' Vocational Guidance and Employment Council, Miss Robinson was appointed its first officer. The Department of Education agreed to free her from part of her teaching duties to carry out the work of vocational guidance in the city as well as that of careers adviser at the Technical College. She moved into an office in the Press Buildings.

The work increased until 1936 when vocational guidance officers were placed under the control of the Education Department instead of the Labour Department. The next years were busy ones for Christobel Robinson; a committee was set up to deal with unemployed women, a difficult task as many were unemployable because they lacked training; and another committee worked on a scheme to improve the status of domestic servants—a forerunner of the Nurse Aid Scheme and Home Aid Service. During World War II she was obliged to act as a sort of junior branch of the Manpower Office, a duty she disliked intensely because she felt she was forcing people into jobs and not finding the best job for the person.

New ideas in education brought a more humane attitude to the emotionally disturbed and the physically handicapped. In all



changes Christobel Robinson was deeply interested. Juvenile delinquency also troubled her greatly and she served on a committee which brought out a "Leisure Time Guide". Conditions of appointment for girls and opportunities for trade training led her to agitate for better terms of apprenticeships. For years it was uphill work, and she faced apathy, prejudice and antagonism inside and outside the Education Department. Import restrictions and the growth of secondary industries had created a fierce demand for juniors, and soaring wage-offers, and she was hard-pressed to keep youngsters at school. The variety of school courses made educational guidance more necessary than ever. She worked with careers advisers and school principals, addressed parents and teachers, and worked unceasingly to promote understanding and interest in vocational guidance.

Christobel Robinson knew well how difficult it was to find an occupation for the handicapped. She hoped at first that such a group might form a Technical College adult class, but the Superintendent of Technical Education demurred, thinking it was more the job of the Labour or Health departments. She therefore worked through the Vocational Guidance Centre Advisory Council to persuade the Mayor to call a public meeting in 1958, at which the Canterbury Sheltered Workshop Association was formed. The Association turned to the community for assistance, to local bodies, Department of Health, service groups, school, church and women's organisations, and Christobel Robinson was soon busy arranging finance, staff premises and a programme of work.

The Sheltered Workshop has been going now for twenty years and in that time seventy trainees have been placed in outside employment, and about three hundred have attended the workshop for periods varying from a few weeks to several years. In 1976 there were twelve full-time staff and five part-time paid staff assisted by thirty-five voluntary part-time helpers—a far cry from the first five years when all supervision was voluntary and part-time. In recognition of her services to education, Christobel Robinson was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1937 and the M.B.E. in 1964.

In 1944 the Government decided that parents needed help with raising their children and expressed the hope that better communication with the schools would assist this. Teachers were appointed to visit homes. These visiting teachers worked with the primary and intermediate schools (later extended to secondary), whose headmasters could telephone a request for a home visit to

investigate absenteeism or a pupil's behaviour. Myrtle Simpson, M.A., and Edna Hyslop, M.A., were the pioneers in the visiting teacher programme. Both were graduates of Canterbury College and had primary school teaching experience. The two women visited homes, and, where assistance for the family was needed, called on state and voluntary social services. The visiting teacher system proved so successful that today it is an integral part of the education system.

Both Myrtle Simpson and Edna Hyslop were to gain controversial positions later. Edna Hyslop (née Anderson), after three years as an infant mistress and ten years as visiting teacher, was the first woman to be given charge of a four-teacher-school by the Canterbury Education Board. Defending the appointment, the Education Department's Senior Inspector said: "There is no reason why more women should not occupy such senior posts where grading and other qualifications entitle them to consideration." Myrtle Simpson transferred from visiting teaching to the remedial reading clinic. In 1948 she was appointed to Ardmore Teachers' College as a tutor-lecturer, advising applicants transferring to teaching from other positions. In 1957 she became the first woman Primary Inspector in the Canterbury District, again, not without criticism.

In the 'thirties parents were encouraged to take a more active part in school activities, and parent-teacher organisations were established in many schools. Women, with smaller families and with more labour-saving devices, now had the time to help. One teacher who encouraged such participation was Kassie Turner who devoted her life to education. She spent nineteen years at the Normal School where, as teacher-in-charge of the Model II school she gave practical training to student-teachers. In 1938 she was granted a Carnegie travelling scholarship to study overseas the training of students for the education of children aged between three and eight years. In 1941 Miss Turner became the Infant Mistress at Waimairi Primary School. There she formed a Mothers' Group which up to seventy mothers attended each month to discuss child development. Soon the group was investigating the need for a kindergarten in the Bryndwr district.

When Miss Turner, now Mrs McCreanor, retired from teaching in 1949 she joined the Christchurch Free Kindergarten Association, where her new ideas gave impetus to the movement. In 1955 she became Dominion President at a time when demands for kindergartens were growing throughout the country. She remained

a member of the council till 1960 when, in recognition of her work for the Association, she became the first recipient of the Kindergarten Gold Medal. In 1962 Kassie McCreanor was awarded the M.B.E. for her services to education.

Doreen Dolton (Mrs McMeekan), also, was a pioneer in parent education. In 1938 she was appointed tutor in child development for the Association for Country Education by the New Zealand Carnegie Advisory Committee. The intention was to bring to country people the stimulus of ideas on education and child-care put forward by the new Education Fellowship visiting lecturers of 1937.

Adult discussion courses (familiar to W.E.A. students) and consultations about children with special difficulties proved good ways of meeting local requirements. Weekly lessons in child development were given to all home-life pupils at Rangiora High School by 1940. The Nursery School, open there once a week during school hours for children aged two to five years, brought class tuition to life, because the girls gained experience in caring for pre-school-children. This was one of the year's optional subjects for seniors, while juniors came for at least six consecutive weeks, during which, as well as observing, they took a full part in all activities. Nursery School satisfied the Carnegie Advisory Committee by offering parents opportunities to see for themselves how ideas worked, thus supplementing their course discussions and reading.

Doreen Dolton helped not only to introduce the teaching of child development into secondary schools—as the Rangiora experiment was the forerunner of a similar course run by other schools—but also to develop the Canterbury Play Centre Association.

As a result of a visit by Mrs P. Smithells, of the Wellington Nursery Play Centre Association, a similar Christchurch association was formed. The first centre was opened in September 1941 in Fendalton, and other such centres, where pre-school children and their mothers can meet regularly, have opened in city suburbs and country townships throughout Canterbury and the West Coast. There children learn while enjoying play with well-designed equipment, and mothers, taking turns to help, can see and discuss how children behave.

Doreen Dolton, president from 1942 to 1944, remained a member of the central committee and unofficial adviser until 1948. In 1964 she returned to lecture at the Supervisor Training Course.



She then found herself taking active roles in the association. After retiring in 1971, she was elected a life member.

Another woman who set out to cater for those who needed special attention was Marion Saunders, undoubtedly the pioneer of speech therapy as it is practised in New Zealand today. In 1922 Marion Saunders entered the Teachers' Training College in Christchurch. On graduation she was appointed to the School for the Deaf at Sumner, where already there were groups for hearing cases with speech difficulties. Four years of hard work and study there gave the necessary training for a special speech class teacher; then, when in 1930 the Education Department established the first speech training class at the Normal School, Marion Saunders was transferred from a special speech class in Dunedin to take charge of it. There was no equipment, but the headmaster said, "Go ahead and develop the work as you think best."

Very soon she began to develop her method. Although oral work occupied much of the time, class became fun, with finger plays, rhymes, and blowing exercises in which children with straws blew miniature paper washing off a miniature line; there were also individual speech books which soon became treasured possessions.

Though at one time the speech teacher visited outside schools, by 1939 children were sent into one of the base classes now becoming known as speech clinics. It was, moreover, recognised that rehabilitation was an essential part of the work: "treat the child not the symptom". Also realised was the importance of complete records, with medical and dental reports kept as well as details of treatment. In 1941 increasing demand made it obvious that a training centre for future speech therapists should be established, and Christchurch was chosen, with Marion Saunders as first director. The students attended the clinics at the Normal School. In addition, outside lectures in neurology, psychotherapy, orthodontics and ear, throat and nose became part of the training scheme.

In 1946 Marion Saunders organised the first national meeting of speech therapists, nearly all of whom she had trained. The New Zealand Speech Therapists' Association was founded with Miss Saunders as its first life member. By the time she retired in 1948, under her guidance thousands of children had learned to speak clearly, while scores of students had qualified and were extending the work throughout New Zealand.

In 1951 she was asked to introduce speech therapy at Christchurch Hospital and she established a part-time clinic at the ear,

nose and throat department, working both with out-patients and in the wards till 1954. Later at the request of Dr Bevan Brown she conducted psychotherapy for disturbed children at his rooms in Andover Street. In 1973, to encourage original writing or research related to problems of speech therapy, she founded the Marion Saunders Trust Fund. This award is open to all New Zealand trained speech therapists and members of N.Z.S.T.A.

It has been said that gifted teachers inspire rather than instruct. This is most true of Marion Saunders. With a withdrawn, insecure child: "I do not try to do this or that but to be the sort of person in whom the child can have complete trust." It is what she was to so many people and the way in which she influenced their lives that is her true and lasting memorial.

Children with reading difficulties have also had their champions. Ruth Trevor, a pioneer in this field, retired as national adviser on reading in 1969. While an education student at Canterbury College in 1933, she became interested in children suffering from what was then called "scholastic retardation". The greater part of her subsequent service in education was concerned in some way with reading improvement, first as a clinic teacher in Christchurch and then as New Zealand's first reading adviser with the Department of Education in Wellington. In this capacity she worked with classroom teachers in each education district, helping them to improve their day-to-day teaching of reading, and encouraging them to cater for children with learning difficulties.

In 1964 when the reading advisory service was expanded and an adviser appointed to each district, Ruth Trevor was responsible for their training. In 1962 she wrote the correspondence course on the teaching of reading for the Diploma in Teaching, and was an examiner until her retirement. The regard which teachers had for her work was shown when she received the "Woman of the Year" Award for 1974 from the Wellington branch of the Educational Institute, and the following year she was made an honorary fellow of the New Zealand Educational Institute.

Not all education is carried on in schools. The Canterbury Museum has always added realism to history and this has been enhanced by the work of Rose Reynolds. Miss Reynolds was the Honorary Custodian of Period Costume at the Museum from 1948 until recently. Her grandfather came to Canterbury on the *Sir George Seymour* in 1850, and she was brought up learning about the life of the pioneers. She first became associated with the Museum when she was appointed to look after the colonial exhibits,



and later the Canterbury Pilgrims' and Early Settlers' Association collection which had just been presented to the Museum. In 1950 it was decided to display these articles to celebrate the Canterbury Centenary. The display was a great success, attracting over 77,000 visitors during the nine months it was open. Afterwards the proposal was made that there should be a permanent display and Rose Reynolds undertook the project. Much of the display had been lent so she wrote to every single lender, three-quarters of whom agreed to present valuable articles to the Museum. She then prepared working drawings, obtained life-size models from shops or had them constructed by the museum staff, made the wigs, and dressed the figures. She also helped to raise the money by asking firms to sponsor a section, and by visiting the descendants of the early settlers. She produced two guide books which enabled visitors to enjoy a self-conducted tour.

Rose Reynolds set out to encourage the preservation of everyday articles used by the early settlers, and to display the collection in their correct perspective and in a compact and attractive form, thus providing visual teaching of Canterbury's history. In recognition of her services she was awarded the M.B.E. in the New Year Honours of 1963. The large number of young children who each holiday wait for the doors to open so they can visit the colonial exhibits proves the success of her venture. Miss Reynold's work with the Canterbury Museum continues and she is now supervising the extension of the present street display into a Canterbury country township of the 1860s.

Today a new world is opening for many women, for they are entering the work-force in large numbers. Many see the need for more education, and for training or retraining. The schools are responding by allowing adult students back into the classrooms. In 1964 when the Christchurch Technical College and West Christchurch amalgamated to form Hagley High School, the school changed from a neighbourhood co-educational high school to a multi-purpose community one. It offers today "second-chance education" to over two hundred adults, two-thirds of them women. It provides a crèche for fifty-two children between the ages of three and five, and it offers a variety of evening classes. The Christchurch Technical Institute provides special courses for women, and one called "Wider Horizons" is designed to give women the knowledge and the confidence they need to return to employment after a period of working at home.



It was not till the 1940s that women were admitted to courses at Lincoln Agricultural College. At first they had to live off the campus, but in 1955 accommodation was provided for them and since then numbers have increased rapidly. Today women are enrolled in almost every course and of the 1328 students in 1977, 199 were women. Lincoln has produced some able scholars: Judith Philips who was nominated for a Rhodes Scholarship in 1976, and Margaret Evans who, working with C. H. G. Irvine in the veterinary department in endocrinology, has given papers on her work on equine reproduction in Germany, England and North America.

Until recent times few Canterbury women appeared in official positions in educational administration. At the beginning of the century, when school committee elections were held few women offered their services; many lacked the confidence to do so, and many more could ill afford the time. However, Emily Chaplin, herself a teacher, served on many committees; she was the first elected woman president of the New Zealand Educational Institute, and she served as a member of the Board of Governors of Canterbury College 1924-38. Emma Cull (Mrs W. H. Clark) was also on the Board of Governors from 1924 to 1933. Seven women have served on the Canterbury Education Board. Many women now serve on secondary schools boards of governors, on primary school committees, and on parent-teacher associations. Women have always dominated the kindergarten movement, and when the Kindergarten College integrated with the Christchurch Teachers' College in 1974 Ngaire Larcombe served on the Christchurch Teachers' College Council.

Today women are gaining better qualifications and some have broken into spheres formerly reserved for men. For many years now women have been appointed to the inspectorate but it was not till 1966 that a woman was appointed a senior inspector. In 1975 Rosamund Heinz became the first headmistress of a co-educational secondary school in the city. Jean Herbison, at present deputy-director of the Christchurch Technical Institute, was in 1968 the first woman to be appointed vice-principal of a teachers' college; but these women are exceptions. Increasingly, positions of responsibility and even principalships of Girls' Schools are filled by men. In the mid-1970s the Department of Education released figures to show thirty-four per cent of the eligible men had senior positions in secondary schools and only six per cent of the eligible women. The Post Primary Teachers' Association

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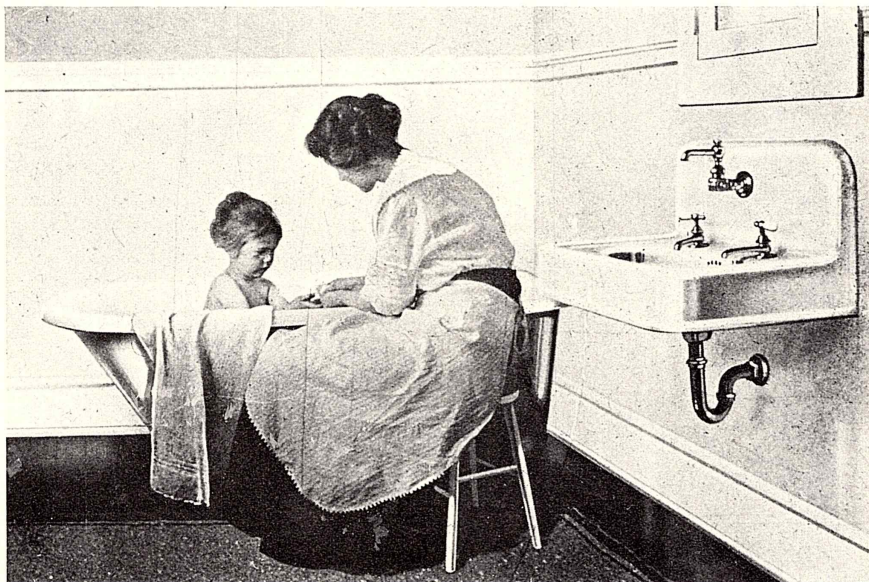
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SOLD LOCALLY

## THE WONDERS OF ELECTRICITY

A motor on the sewing-machine! Hot water through the tap without having to stoke a wetback fire! Whatever will they think of next? These photographs were used by the Christchurch City Council to advertise its electricity extension loan, 1918.







#### NURSES FOR THE BOER WAR

Four of the six Christchurch-trained nurses who served in South Africa, led by Sister Emily Jane Peter. Unfortunately they are not identified.



#### AT THE PAN-PACIFIC WOMEN'S CONFERENCE, 1928

The New Zealand delegation to Honolulu was led by Mrs A. I. Fraer, fourth from left in front row. Mrs T. E. Taylor is second from right in the middle row.





## COOKING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

A member of a climbing  
party at the Ball Hut,  
Mount Cook, in the  
1890s.

## VALERIE YOUNG PUTTING THE SHOT AT CARDIFF, 1958

She has won more  
national titles than any  
other New Zealander,  
man or woman.



*CANTERBURY WOMEN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT*



ELIZABETH REID  
McCOMBS

First woman in N.Z.  
Parliament



MABEL BOWDEN  
HOWARD

First N.Z. woman  
cabinet minister



WHETU TIRIKATENE-  
SULLIVAN

M.P. for Southern  
Maori since 1967



MARY BATCHELOR

M.P. for Avon  
1972-



COLLEEN DEWE

M.P. for Lyttelton  
1975-8



ANN HERCUS

M.P. for Lyttelton  
1978-

is concerned enough to set up a special committee to foster sex equality in education. Seldom do the girls in co-education schools see members of their own sex playing a significant role in their school administration. Sex stereotyping, which the women in 1894 thought could be overcome by education, is almost as great today as it ever was, even in some co-educational schools—although recently these schools have introduced elective studies which allow pupils to choose their non-core subjects; this has resulted in a few boys taking commercial and home science subjects, and a few girls taking such subjects as technical drawing and metalwork. In many girls' schools, however, the girls lack the opportunity to study subjects that are traditionally the preserve of men. It has been found that girls are still more likely to take arts courses, while boys are encouraged to take the science course which opens up many more job opportunities. Is this, as has been suggested, because girls are conditioned not to prove themselves better than boys, and so will not enter their fields? This seems too great a simplification but it does demonstrate the need for more research into the matter.



## Equal Rights

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ON 19 September 1893 New Zealand women were granted one of the most important legal rights able to be conferred by legislation, that of voting for those who would govern their country. The New Zealand fight for women's suffrage had been led by Mrs Katherine Sheppard of Christchurch, along with liberal politicians such as Canterbury's Sir John Hall. At the November elections women enrolled and voted in numbers that astonished everyone. From that time on, no candidate for Parliament could afford to ignore the opinions and demands of women voters.

The right to become practising lawyers was doubly assured to women in 1896. During the debate on amendments to the Law Practitioners and New Zealand Law Society Acts the Prime Minister, Richard Seddon, commented that the only important feature of the bill was that it gave women the right to become members of the legal profession. Sir Robert Stout cordially agreed, but he pointed out that a private bill covering the admission of women had already been passed, so there would be two bills in one session to effect one purpose. In the following year, Miss Ethel Benjamin graduated LL.B. at Otago and was admitted to the bar by Mr Justice Williams, thus becoming the first woman barrister and solicitor of the New Zealand Court.

The second bill referred to had been fostered by the desire of a Canterbury woman to enter the legal profession. Miss Stella May Henderson, born in Kaiapoi on 2 October, 1871, had a brilliant scholastic record. After attending Christchurch Girls' High, she entered Canterbury College, winning a Junior Scholarship in 1888. She completed her B.A. in 1892, and in 1893 was awarded her M.A. with first class honours in English and Latin. With no interest in teaching, Stella Henderson discussed with William Izard, a Christchurch lawyer and part-time law lecturer, the possibility of reading law. She was encouraged by Mr Izard, and with the agreement of his partner, H. H. Loughnan, she began work with

their firm. She also attended law lectures at Canterbury College. As she progressed towards her degree, Mr Izard approached the Member for Riccarton to ensure that legislation would allow her eventually to practise law. In 1898 Miss Henderson passed the final examinations for her LL.B. With her degree and legal experience, she was considering taking up law practice when she was diverted by an extraordinary opportunity. The editor of the *Lyttelton Times*, S. Saunders, offered her a position as parliamentary correspondent and political leader-writer in Wellington. She accepted with alacrity, and set off for Wellington to begin work as the first New Zealand woman parliamentary reporter for a major newspaper.

As a formality, Mr Saunders had written to the president of the Press Gallery committee requesting use of the seat allotted to the *Lyttelton Times* for the new correspondent, Miss Stella Henderson. The president, in an unprecedented step, submitted the letter to all gallery members, who were asked to vote on whether a woman should be allowed into their masculine preserve. After some angry speeches, the members voted against her admittance. Unperturbed by the rebuff, Miss Henderson bought a ticket to the Ladies Gallery; by writing notes balanced on her knee or in the tea rooms, she was able to report by telegraph each evening to Christchurch. Editors from all newspapers combined to protest that their right of choice was being restricted by the decision. The matter was referred to the Reporting and Debates Committee of the House. It was eventually resolved by converting a portion of the Ladies Gallery into a press gallery for Miss Henderson's use.

She carried out her parliamentary reporting duties very competently for nearly two years. So, although Stella Henderson was not the first woman called to the bar, she was certainly the first woman for whom building alterations were made in the House of Representatives.

Stella's sisters, Christina and Elizabeth Henderson, continued the family interest in women's rights. Elizabeth married James McCombs, who had a long career in Parliament as the Member for Lyttelton. After his death, Elizabeth McCombs stood in his place, and in 1933 she became New Zealand's first woman Member of Parliament. Women had become eligible to stand for Parliament in 1919, fourteen years before her election.

The Christchurch Supreme Court librarian has said that to his knowledge no woman was admitted to the bar during the next

forty years, so it seems that the first woman barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court in Christchurch was Miss Isobel Wright, LL.B. She was admitted on 8 April, 1938, by Mr Justice Johnston. The daughter of a well-known local lawyer, Miss Wright went on to further honours at Oxford University, after being awarded the Winter Williams Women's Law Scholarship. A fellow-student, Miss Alison Carey, also from Christchurch, was admitted to the New Zealand bar in May 1938.

Before World War II Canterbury produced few women lawyers and indeed the list of women law practitioners for all of New Zealand was a very short one. In more recent years women have taken a greater interest in the study of law, although they remain a small percentage of the legal profession. In the 1960s twelve women were awarded LL.B. degrees from the University of Canterbury. At the main admission ceremonies in the Christchurch Supreme Court 202 men and seventeen women were admitted to the bar between 1971 and 1976 (the figures would be somewhat higher with individual admissions included). The Official Yearbook for 1973 (the last year that a breakdown by sex was given) records 2730 members of the New Zealand Law Society holding practising certificates, of whom forty-five were women. New Zealand has still to appoint a woman Supreme Court judge.

Women were made eligible to serve as Justices of the Peace in August 1926. The first women J.P.s in Canterbury were appointed that year: Mrs McCombs, Mrs Fraer, Mrs Herbert, Mrs T. E. Taylor and Mrs Roberts. Since then, women have often been appointed Justices of the Peace but have rarely been employed on the bench — a failure apparently attributed to conservative attitudes of men J.P.s who are reluctant to work with women.

Mrs Eveline Cunnington, one of the founders of the Canterbury Women's Institute, had been among the first to advocate women J.P.s, women serving on juries equally with men, and the introduction of women police. For many years women's organisations, especially the N.C.W., and some prominent individuals such as Mrs Peter Fraser, continued to press the case for women being allowed to join the New Zealand Police Force. Having won the right to take part in passing the laws, and sharing in the judicial system, women now wanted a say in law enforcement.

Amendments passed in September 1938 provided for the Police Force Act of 1913 to apply to women, but it was not until 1941 that the first ten women police were admitted. It was announced in April that they would undergo a three-months preparatory



course at the Police Training School in Wellington and then complete the required year's probationary period with practical experience in the four main centres. The ten women recruits included from Christchurch, Lynn Brockett, Vera McConchie and Edna Pearce. The course included lectures on police regulations and methods, and physical drill. Afterwards three each were posted to Auckland and Wellington, and two each to Christchurch and Dunedin, for practical work. They were to be accompanied at first by an experienced policeman, who would give further tuition and also supply confidence. So, dressed in civilian clothes and armed with their newly-acquired registration numbers — W1, W2, &c. — the first women constables began work. Their dedication and training soon showed results. Dunedin claimed the first arrest by a policewoman, Constable Callaghan, on 28 November 1941, but had to concede that honour to Auckland where Constable Pearce had made two arrests on 10 and 22 November, both of women on charges of theft.

"These first pioneer policewomen and subsequent members trained and posted to the four main centres had to fight unobtrusively for acceptance," wrote Constable Rosalie Sterritt in a 1975 award-winning Queen's Gold Medal essay. It was not easy even when she joined with the fourth group of women admitted in 1948. Some of the women were detailed to the Vice Squad and the Special Branch, doing plain-clothes enquiries on illegal bookmaking, sly-grog selling, prostitution and similar offences. They also assisted the C.I.B. with enquiries involving women and children. In many cases, women police were successful in interviews where their men colleagues had failed. Their primary role remained dealing with women and children — catching shoplifters, helping with mental cases, and locating innumerable "lost" children.

Then, in 1953, the women police were given a refresher course in Wellington and for the first time they were put into uniform. The New Zealand public now had visual proof that there really were women police. The women stepped out in navy-blue uniforms, white shirts, black ties and stockings, and navy-blue felt broadbrimmed hats, to patrol city streets, racecourse meetings and parks. It is interesting to note that not until 1951 did the names of policewomen appear in the *N.Z. Police Gazette*, so unofficially-recognised had they been. The 1960s saw big changes. By then, women police were sitting examinations for promotion, the uniform was modernised, and in the late 'sixties men and women began training together at the Police College at Trentham.

The most important advance came in September 1965, with equal pay. Retiring leave and superannuation were also aligned with that of men. Pay equality was granted on the basis that women would undertake duties no less onerous than that of men officers. Women were to be employed on the same variety of work as men, and had to be prepared to work around the clock if necessary.

In many ways, Constable Sterritt epitomises the determination and fortitude of the women who have made a career in the police force since 1941. She suffered a serious spinal injury on duty in 1950, while searching for a missing mental patient on One Tree Hill. The injury was aggravated by a fall while on duty in Christchurch in 1954. Often in pain, and requiring constant medical attention in and out of hospital, she finally underwent an operation which immobilised some of her vertebrae. Throughout this time she worked, when able, in the inquest inquiry office. Then, in October 1959, she was given notice requiring her to retire as medically unfit by the end of the year. Rosalie Sterritt decided to fight the case, not only for herself, but for all police injured in the course of their duties. There were ambiguities in the 1958 Police Act which needed legal clarification; aided by her lawyer Mr A. C. Perry (later a Supreme Court judge and now knighted) and finally the Police Association, she brought a test case, heard in the Supreme Court in 1960. She won her case, but the decision was later reversed in the Court of Appeal. However, she had proved her point, and she remains an active member of the force, with over twenty-eight years of service. Along with many of her fellow police officers, she has devoted much of her spare time to community work, such as Scouting, and has helped especially handicapped children, the aged and disabled. In June 1976 she was awarded the Queen's Service Medal.

Today the field is open for women to advance in police service. No longer is a woman required to resign if she marries, as in the early days; and women police are now granted maternity leave. Statistics show the increasing trend: In 1969 women police comprised one inspector, two sergeants and 66 constables; in 1974, although the inspector had retired, two senior-sergeants, two sergeants and 112 women constables were listed. In 1977, Christchurch had eighteen policewomen. Two were detectives in the C.I.B., three in general inquiries, and two in youth aid. The remainder worked general duties with men constables, two police-women being rostered for duty in each eight-hour section. With



equal pay and equal opportunity for promotion, women in the force can now aspire with the men to carry the baton one day as Commissioner of Police in New Zealand.

After decades of agitation, the N.C.W.'s campaign for judicial equality seemed crowned with success when legislation was enacted which enabled women to serve on juries, if they wished. In May 1942 Mrs M. M. Dreaver, M.P. for Waitemata, gave notice that she intended to introduce a Women Jurors Bill, which would enable women between the ages of twenty-five and sixty, who met the same qualifications as men, to volunteer for jury service. The bill passed without opposition in October.

The procedure laid down for a woman wishing to serve was first to inform the sheriff of her jury district that she wished to volunteer for jury service. After a police investigation, to ensure that she was not exempted or disqualified by provisions which already applied to men, her name could be added to the jury roll. After that it was the luck of the draw whether her name was balloted as a prospective juror and, ultimately, whether she would be challenged by the lawyers on either side in a particular case.

With the demands of wartime and postwar years, New Zealand women showed little interest in volunteering for jury service, and considered it an onerous responsibility rather than a right too long withheld.

Two Canterbury women led the campaign to arouse women from this apathy. In February 1956, at a meeting of the Christchurch branch of the N.C.W., Mrs Gwendoline Samson presented a report on women's attitude to jury service. She had written to the sheriffs of the fourteen Supreme Court districts, asking for information about women volunteers. Canterbury had ten names enrolled. Five of the districts had received no applications from women volunteers that year. From the other nine Mrs Samson estimated that only thirty-nine women in the whole of New Zealand were interested enough to volunteer. It seemed, too, that one woman in Auckland and one in Wellington, both on civil juries, were the only women in New Zealand actually to serve. This report started widespread discussion and prompted a nation-wide campaign to arouse women's interest in volunteering for jury service. The government was pressed for an amendment to law, making jury service compulsory for women as it was for men. Mrs Samson toured widely, speaking to women's groups about jury service. She exhorted all eligible women to volunteer, for the more women



who volunteered, the greater the possibility that women would actually serve beside men in jury cases.

Mrs Helen Garrett, a member of the Canterbury Federation of University Women, decided to take up the challenge and she became well known for the fight she waged with officials over women jurors. An article of hers appeared in the *N.Z. Listener*—entitled “How to Become a Jurywoman”, it humorously described her tribulations in enrolling for jury service, and at the same time provided women with a practical guide to enrolment. A radio programme, “Gentlewomen of the Jury”, followed, in which a panel of Mrs Garrett, Mrs Samson, Law Professor H. R. Gray, and Mr B. J. Drake, a barrister, discussed the reluctance in New Zealand to accept women jurors.

The test came in February 1960 when Mrs Garrett, one of forty-five prospective jurors, was balloted for the jury in a criminal case. Both Mr Drake, for the defence, and Mr Mahon, for the Crown, remained silent as Mrs Garrett took her seat in the first row of the jury-box. With counsel not challenging her, Mrs Garrett became the first woman to sit on a criminal jury in New Zealand. Shortly afterwards she made further legal history by becoming the “foreman” for another criminal case.

Despite her success, Mrs Garrett maintained that the real solution lay in changing the legislation so women would be called for jury service on the same basis as men. Under continued pressure from women's organisations, the Juries Act of 1908 was amended in 1963, abolishing the voluntary service of women. The word “person” was substituted for “man”; and women no longer had to apply to be included on the jury roll. However, women could now apply in writing to be exempted from jury service merely on the grounds that they were women, no other reason being necessary.

In 1968 the Chief Justice, Sir Richard Wild, addressed the N.C.W. conference at Napier and commented that the number of women remained disproportionately low compared with the number of men called for jury service. However, he confirmed that the voluntary system had been a failure and praised the N.C.W. for their work in bringing women into jury service. The N.C.W. has continued to advocate that women should be excused from service only when they, like men, provide a valid reason for not serving. In submission on the Juries Amendment Bill in 1976, the N.C.W. emphasised this view, although claiming that the care of young dependent children should be a valid

excuse. Women also questioned whether, in this age of easy transport, the fifteen-mile limit remained significant and suggested it should be changed to permit a wider range of prospective jurors.

Both Mrs Samson and Mrs Garrett have continued their interest in civic affairs. Mrs Samson is a Justice of the Peace and sometime president of the Citizens Advice Bureau in Christchurch. Mrs Garrett is a Christchurch City Councillor and is active on many local boards.

Women's battle for equal pay and opportunity in employment has a long and complex history. Most advances have come as result of nation-wide campaigns, which of necessity centred in Wellington and concentrated on changes of legislation. It is possible only to outline some highlights of these campaigns and the contributions made by Canterbury women.

The first National Council of Women was concerned about the economic exploitation of women and a resolution on equal pay was passed at the 1897 Christchurch session. Miss Christina Henderson, a graduate of Canterbury College and one of the few women in the N.C.W. who earned her living, wrote a report, entitled "Women's Industrial Position in New Zealand" for the session held at Auckland in 1899. She pointed out that changes were needed, with the growing numbers of women entering the work force and the growing belief that women should be able to earn a living if they wished. She described cases of young women who worked for no wages, such as pupil-teachers and, especially, young dressmakers, who after working their first year without pay could be turned out at the whim of their employers. The plight of the dressmakers, the shop-assistants, and indeed the whole range of women's occupations, showed the same thing, that women's earnings fell far short of a "living wage". The reasons for this she listed as: 1) physical strength; 2) the tendency of men workers to bar women from higher paid and more responsible posts; 3) the expectation of marriage and consequent release from industrial work, which lessened women's interest in their work; 4) the fact that a large proportion of women were not dependent on their earnings; 5) the belief that women can live on less and their wants are fewer; 6) the inferior mobility of women compared with men. She advocated better education for girls, better training and better job placements.

In 1900, at the Dunedin conference, Miss Henderson read a paper on the ethics of wage-earning, concluding that in all cases

where men and women were engaged in the same work an equal wage should be paid for that work. A resolution was adopted, endorsing that view. In 1902 Miss Jessie Mackay, a prominent Canterbury member, also contributed a paper on equal pay and another resolution was unanimously carried. Both of these Canterbury women came from the teaching profession; Miss Henderson taught at Christchurch Girls' High where she became first assistant, and Miss Mackay at various country schools. The difference between men and women teachers' pay was raised during the meeting between Seddon and a deputation of N.C.W. members in 1903. The Prime Minister's solution was to threaten to lower men's salaries to equal women's! Mrs Sievwright, in her presidential address to executive members at New Plymouth in September 1903, quoted the *Lyttelton Times* as saying, "There is no more cruel injustice in all New Zealand than the assessment of women's work at a lower value than that of men."

Traditional attitudes brought from Great Britain, and the relatively small number of women permanently employed, combined to establish differential rates of pay in awards and agreements, even when there were no prescribed statutory differences. In 1903 came the first example of differential rates of pay for men and women written into the same award by the Arbitration Court; this was the Christchurch Tailoring Award, which granted men piece-workers one shilling an hour and women eightpence an hour.

During the World Wars women were admitted to the Public Service on the same basis as men. In times of unemployment the practice had been to pay women lower rates, and to bar them from promotion by appointing them as temporary staff only.

As World War II neared its end, the Public Service Women's Committee, formed in 1944, and with the backing of the Public Service Association, decided to attack this situation. In 1945 the Public Service Commission agreed to the principle of equal pay for equal work, and in 1947 recruitment of women resumed without "temporary" restrictions, although full implementation of the equal pay principle remained elusive. In 1945 the Minimum Wage Act, although still differentiating between basic rates of pay for men and women, ended the concept of male rates being based on their role as the breadwinner, which had been included in 1930s amendments to the Arbitration & Conciliation Acts. Working women were becoming socially accepted.



By the 1950s, with international organisations such as the I.L.O. advocating equal pay, the stage was set for a major reform in the Public Service. The P.S.A. called for a national equal-pay conference, and in 1955 the women's conference initiated the campaign. Appeals were lodged by various women in the clerical division of the Public Service, for, by an obscure process, all women ranked below all men for promotion purposes. The test case of Miss Moss in the Supreme Court led to the test case of Mrs Parker, and this proved a turning point. Mrs Parker had lodged an appeal against a newly-appointed man cadet. The Public Service Appeal Board upheld her appeal and the P.S.C. was placed in an awkward position. After vacillating for over two months, the Commission reduced her salary from £695 to £460 a year; and, although she was an experienced employee of the Inland Revenue Department with control of eight people in her section, her duties were reduced to those of a cadet. The injustice of this action had wide repercussions. Parliament was in session, and also the biennial conference of the N.C.W. Delegates sent telegrams of protest to their M.P.s and Parliament was forced to take note of the issue. The Prime Minister, Sidney Holland, called for a meeting with representatives of women's organisations to discuss equal pay, among other matters. In October 1956, accompanied by appropriate ministers, the Premier met thirty women representatives of fourteen national women's organisations. Nearly all the meeting was devoted to discussion on equal pay and opportunity for women. Mrs Doreen Grant of Christchurch, Dominion President of the Federation of University Women, reported later that she felt the women had presented a good case for equal pay, and that it had been sympathetically heard.

The Prime Minister had asked for an advisory committee to assist in "tackling the practical problems involved in introducing equal pay", and in April 1957 the Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity was inaugurated in Wellington. Membership was open to all organisations subscribing to the objects of the Council.

In August 1957, Miss Hooper, chairwoman of the Council, speaking to the Christchurch branch of the Business & Professional Women group, reviewed the situation. Both major political parties had accepted the principle of equal pay, she said, but neither really had a policy to implement it. The Federation of Labour was sympathetic, but had done nothing, although some individual unions were active. The P.S.A. was actively promoting equal pay, but the teachers' organisations remained cautious. Women's

organisations through the N.C.W. supported the principle, with some traditional supporters from the B.P.W., the Federation of University Women and the Y.W.C.A.; but other organisations more concerned with home and family were hesitant. There had been some progress. The professions did not discriminate, and in industry eighteen awards specifically provided for the practice of equal pay and others contained no mention of sex in rates of pay. In the preceding few years, she concluded, there had been a decided movement to close the gap between men's and women's pay in agreements, partly caused by the shortage of labour. But with a buoyant economy, few women were interested enough to organise for bargaining on equal pay.

After "lengthy and sometimes acrimonious negotiations", the Government Service Equal Pay Act 1960 was passed in the last week of the third year of Labour's reign. With an election pending, what politician wanted to oppose a measure implementing a principle that both major parties supported? With three stages of implementation, equal pay gradually became effective throughout the State Services by the end of 1965.

The Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity, which had worked so diligently for equal pay in the Public Service, was anxious to extend this to the private sector. In 1969 the Council amended its constitution to allow local committees to be formed outside Wellington. A public meeting in July 1969 inaugurated the Canterbury branch. The chairwoman, Mrs Rita King, was unable to attend so the secretary of the Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity, Miss O'Connor, came from Wellington and spoke to the gathering, along with Mr Rosenberg from Canterbury University. The meeting unanimously approved the formation of an interim local committee.

In August 1969 the interim committee—Mrs Jacqueline Steincamp, Mrs Mary Batchelor, Miss Chapman, Mrs Woodham, Mrs Aitken, Mrs Jackson and Mrs Hobson—met to settle the details. Tentatively adopting the national constitution as a guide, the committee sent invitations to a wide variety of Canterbury organisations, asking for support of the Council's aims at the proposed public meeting in September. The committee also planned to generate newspaper correspondence to publicise both the meeting and the equal pay campaign. By September five organisations—the Canterbury-Westland Clothing Trades Union, the Sydenham and St Albans branches of the Labour Party, the Shop Assistants' Union, and the Christchurch branch of Federated

Business & Professional Women—had agreed to support the Council. Committee members reported the reactions of other organisations which had decided not to join; the local branch of the National Council of Women, for example, did not intend to affiliate but would send observers. Arrangements were made for the public meeting to be held in September, with Mrs Doreen Grant as the guest speaker.

Mrs Mary Batchelor, interim committee chairwomen, formally opened the public meeting and spoke briefly about the Council's aim of implementing the principle of equal pay and opportunity for women in all spheres of employment. Mr O'Neill then took the chair and nominations were called for three officers and seven executive members. For president, Mrs Batchelor was nominated by the Canterbury Clerks', Cashiers' and Office Employees' Industrial Union of Workers and seconded by Mrs Pat Aitken of the Railway Officers' Institute; Mrs J. Steincamp was nominated by the Canterbury & Westland Shop Assistants' Union and seconded by Mr P. Neary from the Aranui branch of the Labour Party. However, Mrs Steincamp withdrew and Mrs Batchelor was unanimously elected to the presidency. Mrs Steincamp was unanimously elected vice-president. Mrs E. M. Aitken was elected secretary-treasurer.

Eleven nominations were received for the executive; and after a secret ballot the seven elected members were: Miss C. Bird, nominated by the Progressive Youth; Miss D. Chapman, nominated by the Christchurch branch of B.P.W.; Mrs Una Dromgoole, nominated by the Canterbury branch of the Federation of University Women; Mrs I. Jackson, nominated by the Rubber Workers' Union; Miss A. Moses, nominated by the Radical Students' Association; Mr M. O'Neill, nominated by the Sydenham branch of the Labour Party; and Mrs M. Woods, nominated by the Labour Party, St Albans women's branch. Mrs Grant, the guest speaker, then spoke to the gathering. Its inaugural meeting completed, the Christchurch branch of the Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity was now well organised and eager to launch into action.

At the first executive meeting in October members concentrated on the coming national elections. They decided to attend as many election meetings as possible, and to ask candidates how they stood on equal pay.

Eventually, nineteen organisations affiliated. Those not already mentioned were: the Canterbury Local Bodies Officers' Industrial



Union; the Canterbury-Westland Woollen, Knitting, Hosiery & Carpet Union; the Canterbury Dental Assistants' & Technicians' Industrial Union; the Canterbury Freezing Workers' Union; the Canterbury Glass-Workers' Union; the Canterbury region of the N.Z. Post-Primary Teachers' Association; and the University of Canterbury Students' Association.

The year 1970 saw successes and setbacks. The February quarterly meeting was poorly attended, but in June Mrs Batchelor was able to report that equal pay had become an important political issue. A private bill, introduced by the Labour Opposition, had caused the Government to consider setting up a Commission of Inquiry to study the matter.

There had been resignations for a variety of reasons, and Mr P. Anderson, Miss Margaret Cushen, Mrs W. Massey, and Mr T. Moody were elected to the executive with Miss D. Chapman as vice-president.

At the annual meeting in December 1971 Mrs Batchelor reported on the forthcoming Commission of Inquiry. She also described talks she had given at secondary schools and other groups, which had been well received. Discussion on the recently-negotiated Grocery Assistants' Award, where a women's category was inserted when previously none had been included, showed this to be a big disappointment to members. Mrs Fordham pointed out women had accepted the lower rate; while Mr Neary noted there was a "reticence" in the Trade Union movement towards equal pay. Mrs Aitken stood down as secretary-treasurer and was replaced by Mr Anderson; and Mrs Massey was replaced by Mrs Marian Logeman. Mrs Elsie Locke spoke on "Equal Pay and Opportunity and the Family Woman".

The five-member Commission of Inquiry began work in January 1971. The Christchurch branch executive members, delegates and associate members were invited to give their written suggestions to Mrs Batchelor or Mr Anderson and the submissions were then prepared for presentation. At the meeting in May Mrs S. Piesse, Mrs Batchelor, Mrs Dromgoole and Mr Laws spoke on the submissions of the various organisations. Miss Chapman resigned as vice-president and Miss Shona Mann became an executive member.

By the time submissions closed in July, seventy-four witnesses had given evidence. The Commission's report was presented in September. Because of effects on the economy, the timing and repercussions of equal pay had to be carefully studied but finally

the long-awaited legislation, the Equal Pay Act was passed in October 1972. In November the Christchurch branch of the Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity held its final annual meeting and then went into recess.

With the implementation period for equal pay now completed, the issue remains important. Some anomalies have been retained in legislation, such as the prohibition of women working in factories between midnight and seven a.m., but it would be a complicated procedure to change these, as I.L.O. conventions govern most on the grounds of health.

Full equal opportunity for women remains an objective for future resolution.

## Country Women

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CONDITIONS in the early colonial days forced New Zealand women to tackle tasks outside the purely domestic sphere, to a greater degree than in their homeland. They had to be adaptable and independent, as often they could not count on outside help; and nowhere was this more true than on the isolated farms and stations of Canterbury.

Jessie Mackay has described the life her mother, Elizabeth, endured on Double Hill station where Jessie spent her childhood: "The loneliness was terrible, especially when at mustering time all the men were camped for days on the high country. One neighbour of her own sex had come before her, but she was separated by inaccessible miles, save in the hours when woman most needs woman. For library, the young couple possessed a Bible, a record of the persecuted Convenanters, and a few books of sermons."

From the mid-1890s, New Zealand moved steadily towards prosperity, with rising overseas prices, increasing farm production, and greater diversification. Small, scattered villages grew up to serve surrounding farmlands. Roads, bridges and electric-power after 1920 all played their part in making the conditions of many rural women in Canterbury a little less severe, but, like the pioneer Elizabeth Mackay, they were still "anchored—or cloistered—by their young children" and by their isolation.

A feature of many early settlements in Canterbury was the annual Agricultural and Pastoral Show. Although the part taken by women consisted mainly of producing huge sculptures from home-made butter—described by the press of the times as "marvels of oleaginous architecture"—the day was usually the greatest social occasion that many of the women experienced during the whole year. A *Canterbury Times* report on the Courtenay Show at Kirwee in 1890 recorded that amongst the visitors were the three parliamentary candidates for the district—who took the



opportunity to "forward their interests with the electors and the electors' wives and babies". By the time the next election was held, in 1893, the "electors' wives" also had the right to vote.

Country women remained relatively untouched by the ferment of the suffrage movement and only rarely sought careers outside marriage and the raising of their children. Before the First World War job opportunities and even social contact with other country dwellers were very limited and the attentions of women centred very much on home and family. Closer settlement brought an influx of women with a wider range of backgrounds and greater education: some women came as teachers, nurses or doctors, others as the wives of doctors, teachers, bankers, ministers of religion, and workers in various farm-orientated trades.

As communities grow, there is often a tendency for work formerly done by individuals to be superseded by organised communal effort. In the years following the First World War came two organisations, whose functions could be said to continue and systematise the mutual help performed by pioneer country women. They were the Country Women's Institutes and the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union, which became the Women's Division of Federated Farmers in 1946. Today these two are the largest women's organisations in New Zealand, and have continued to flourish despite wars, social changes, and economic recessions. Through these groups, rural women have gained companionship and confidence and have promoted many improvements in both country and national life.

The first such organisation in New Zealand was the Country Women's Institute, which was started by Miss Ann Elizabeth Jerome Spencer. Miss Spencer, who had left a career in teaching to take up a small fruit and honey farm near Napier, was later responsible also for the formation of Townswomen's Guilds in New Zealand.

Elizabeth Jerome Spencer was in England during the latter part of World War I, and there she visited an exhibition of women's handcrafts staged by the Women's Institutes of England, a movement that had originated in Canada and had spread to England in 1915. Miss Spencer knew well what Red Cross meetings meant to the country women at home where she farmed her own land. While preparing parcels for servicemen, the women benefited from one another's company and mutual exchange of ideas. The Red Cross meetings during wartime had brought country women together as a group for the first time. Miss Spencer became

convinced that the Women's Institute movement could not only fill the gap in peacetime but could make its own contribution to a fuller life in the country districts of New Zealand.

The movement began at Rissington in 1921 and gradually spread throughout New Zealand, though for a number of years the only branch of the Institute in the South Island was that established by Mrs Elder at Waituna in South Canterbury. Despite the adversities of "the Slump", the movement developed in many directions—encouraging thrifty ideas, giving drama and choral performances, fostering homecrafts, gardening and floral-work.

In 1936 Mrs Katharine Deans, wife of William Deans of Darfield, Canterbury, was elected the second Dominion President. The Christchurch *Press* reported that Mrs Deans "conducted the meeting with an efficiency and regard to business procedure that many men might envy". During 1936-8 Mrs Deans spoke for Country Women's Institutes in official moves being considered to encourage adult education. In 1936 the movement was represented at a conference in Christchurch, convened at the request of the Minister of Education, the outcome of which was a committee to submit plans for the co-ordination of adult education. In 1937 a co-ordinating committee, consisting of members of the Country Women's Institutes and the Women's Division of the Farmers' Union, as it was then known, was formed. The committee received a grant from the Council of Adult Education to assist the employment of tutors in dressmaking, handcrafts, gardening, food preservation, drama and art.

Group-travel schemes, radio broadcasts and magazine articles were added in the next few years, and in 1939 Mrs J. W. McLeod, newly elected president of the North Canterbury Federation, inaugurated a housekeeping scheme. Mrs McLeod wrote: "I became so impressed with the cheerful fortitude of country women under what seemed most primitive conditions of housekeeping, few holidays, and an overdose of the endless round and common task, too much work after confinements, and too little help at all times, that a scheme whereby help could be given in times of special need, financed by all Women's Institute members, could be both practical and a great help."

During the war years, 1939-45, members of every Institute branch undertook a wide variety of war work. Food parcels for servicemen, knitted garments, camouflage nets, pillow-cases for emergency hospitals, waste-metal collections, these were only a

small part of the tasks performed by country women. In Canterbury, Mrs Deans organised the making of sheepskin jackets for navy men on minesweepers. Thousands of sheepskins were provided by the National Patriotic Fund Board, and members of the Mairehau, Burwood and Christchurch centres met weekly to cut out and handsew the garments. Over two thousand jackets were completed and the left-over pieces were sent to other branches to be made into gloves and slippers. Katharine Deans was later awarded the British Empire Medal for her part in arranging for the wartime collection of nine hundred tons of waste-metal and scrap-iron by the country women of New Zealand.

In education, arts, crafts and domestic science, the Country Women's Institute continues to fill a place in the lives of rural women in Canterbury, and throughout New Zealand.

The Women's Division of Federated Farmers of New Zealand, as it is now known, was formed for humanitarian reasons. In 1925 a group of sixteen farmers' wives who were accompanying their husbands to a Farmers' Union conference in Wellington, heard a talk by L. H. McAlpine, the Farmers' Union organiser, who had just completed a tour of some of the remote rural areas of New Zealand. He described the conditions in which women lived in the backblocks. His account of their loneliness and privations aroused the sympathies of his listeners, and later the women formed a new society, the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union. They reasoned that co-operation with the existing Farmers' Union would increase the opportunities of both organisations to better the living conditions of country people. The only Canterbury woman at the inaugural meeting was Mrs P. R. Talbot of Timaru. Each member present was asked to take news of the organisation back to her own district and to make widely known the aims of the group.

The new organisation sought ways to be of practical assistance to country women in remote areas. In 1926 hundreds of hand-written letters were sent to such women to find out their most urgent needs. From the replies it appeared that the most vital need of country women was for reliable help during illness or when the mother of a family had to be absent from home. From this sprang the Bush Nurse and Emergency Housekeeper Scheme founded in 1929. The Bush Nurse Scheme was to develop into the District Nursing Service.

It was realised that the wages required to engage women who answered the Division's advertisements for "housekeeper willing



to do anything" and "bush nurse with surgery and midwifery certificates" were beyond the resources of most struggling farmers of the times. Thus each branch was asked to contribute to a central fund to help subsidise the wages of nurses and housekeepers, many of whom suffered great hardships in making long and difficult journeys over rough unformed roads, bush tracks and dangerous rivers.

In 1929 also, a Christchurch branch of the Women's Division of the Farmers' Union was founded by Mrs J. D. Hall, who with her husband had farmed in the Hororata district. Mrs Hall and Mrs H. A. Denham continued to organise further groups, and branches were soon formed in Amberley, Darfield, Dunsandel, Motukarara, Tai Tapu, Fernside, West Eyreton and Hororata.

In the early 1930s a forerunner of the present Country Library Service was started by the organisation, in the form of a Book Club. For a subscription of 2s. 6d. a year, a bundle containing two books, plus magazines and children's books was sent to the household regularly. The parcels were carried free of charge by the New Zealand Railways.

Extensions of the housekeeper scheme were the holiday and rest homes which the W.D.F.U. acquired for country women. In Canterbury, these included Te Kiteroa in Waimate and Stratheona at Pleasant Point. Stratheona was used as a girls' training school in home arts until 1962. The inscription on the gates of Stratheona read: "A hundred men make an encampment, but one woman makes a home."

Te Kiteroa, a beautiful old home set in spacious grounds, and used as a residential school for instruction in arts, crafts, handwork and other educational courses, is the only remaining rest and holiday home owned by the organisation in Canterbury.

Education has always been a strong force in rural women's groups. In 1935, when the W.D.F.U. and the Country Women's Institute combined to form a liaison committee to work together in international affairs and adult education, a grant of £3000 was given by the National Council of Adult Education for educational projects among country women. Tutors in dressmaking and nutrition were appointed.

In 1967, when the administration of adult education was altered, country women lost their representation on the National Council and had fewer itinerant tutors to direct. But co-ordinating committees have remained active, arranging schools and finding tutors on subjects of interest to country women. "Women and the

Law" was a seminar held in Canterbury in recent years, and studies of rural communities have also been made throughout the district.

While country women's groups were originally founded for companionship and mutual support, their members have been able to assert themselves, through their groups, to advance a wide range of improvements in rural and national life. The Women's Division of Federated Farmers, as it became in 1946, has been instrumental in securing better bus services for rural schoolchildren. The organisation presses strongly for more adequate boarding allowances and bursaries for country children, and advocated the visiting teacher service for Correspondence School children in remote districts. As well, country women persistently called for school dental clinics throughout the country.

Farm safety measures have always had the full support of both women's groups. The Women's Division of Federated Farmers sponsored research into the disease leptospirosis in 1975 and received much support throughout New Zealand.

Statistical information on the problems and needs of country life was studied by sociology staff of the University of Canterbury in conjunction with the Women's Division of Federated Farmers in 1975. One of the features that emerged from "The Rural Women of New Zealand" survey was that, although most women in country districts had a strong commitment to family life, an important part in the social life of the present-day country woman is the large amount of voluntary community work through clubs and societies. Of the six regions surveyed, participation in organised groups was highest in Canterbury. Women use their skills and enthusiasm in school committees, church groups, Plunket, children's groups and country women's movements; many activities have been taken up to enlarge the social and educational opportunities for their children.

With the amalgamation and closing of many smaller country schools during recent years, some communities are faced with the loss of a focal point for their district. Mrs Hayman, of Tasman Downs station at Lake Tekapo, solved the problem of isolation and education for the children of neighbouring stations by starting her own primary school in 1923. As sole teacher, she held lessons in a storeroom in the station's chaffhouse and stable. After eleven years, when the local children outgrew the small school, Mrs Hayman took boarders from farther afield to maintain the school roll at the official minimum of nine. In 1938 the Government

granted Tasman Downs a school building, which was moved to another South Canterbury site when Mrs Hayman closed the school in 1947.

The desire to help young women living in the country, and to foster knowledge of agriculture, homecraft, the arts, and community affairs, has led to the establishment of Country Girls' Clubs and the formation of a New Zealand federation. Special weeks are held when country girls gather in the larger centres for instructional courses, interchange of ideas, and sightseeing. More recently the Country Girls' Clubs have amalgamated with Young Farmers' Clubs but their aims remain unaltered.

In the field of adult education the Department of Agriculture recognised the needs of country women as early as 1945, when Mrs Dorothy Johnson was appointed a rural sociologist to the women's section in Canterbury. Mrs Johnson spoke to country women's groups on a wide variety of topics, from interior decorating and home storage plans, to problems of children and family life in isolated areas. Her ideas became known beyond Canterbury in articles printed in the *Journal of Agriculture* and by radio broadcasts. In her travels throughout Canterbury and Westland, Dorothy Johnson encouraged the formation of Country Girls' Clubs and rural women's organisations and gave all groups her active support with lectures and demonstrations. Although the position she held in the Department of Agriculture was eliminated in 1972, several courses requested by Canterbury women have been held by the Department in Darfield, Ashburton and at Lincoln Agricultural College. Many country women have become vitally interested in their role as partner in most farm activities and are keen to learn modern systems of farm budgeting and secretarial work. These courses for women are part of an intensive agricultural training programme for women.

Canterbury has a high proportion of women who are farmers in their own right. With very little outside help, these capable women run large farms with great success.

The Second World War brought an influx of women to work on farms. The first Women's Land Service in Canterbury was the Business and Professional Women's Voluntary Army which was formed in June 1940. As their contribution to the war effort, members cultivated land in and around Christchurch and grew vegetables for institutions, orphanages and those in need. Two women gardeners, trained at Chelsea and Kew, gave their services as instructors.



In 1940 the Government called on woman-power to help meet the shortage of farm manpower caused by enlistments in the forces. The Women's Land Corps was established under the Women's War Service Auxiliary, but it was not until Japan entered the war that the number of men drafted into camps grew so large that the use of women's labour in practically every occupation became essential. In 1942 the Land Corps was reorganised as the Women's Land Service, with improved rates of pay, a dress uniform and a complete set of working clothes, as an attraction for recruits; free board and lodging was provided by the farmer. The employment of a farmer's relatives as land girls on farms was also authorised under the new scheme.

By June 1942 only seven girls were employed on Canterbury farms, but gradually farmers overcame their reluctance to take part in the scheme. The girls, whose tasks were mostly monotonous and uninteresting, despite the smart khaki uniform and green tie, nevertheless began to apply for farmwork in growing numbers. Possibly as an inducement to the girls of Christchurch to join the service, a report described the scheme as a "regular marriage bureau", with many land girls remaining and settling in the country. The *Journal of Agriculture* ran a page of special interest to land girls, and educational correspondence courses were made available to them.

Country people have always had a fine reputation for giving their time freely in the interests of the community. Today electricity, mechanisation, and better communications and transport have done much to lessen the isolation and hardships of country life that the country women's organisations first sought to mitigate. From the ranks of these groups have come resourceful women working in all fields of endeavour. Lord Bledisloe, speaking on the place of rural women's organisations in New Zealand life, expressed it well: "Country women's groups have enabled women to discover their own potentialities through mutual intercourse, free exchange of ideas and the pooling of individual knowledge and experience."

## Something for the Children

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IN talking to older citizens of Christchurch, one finds that as children few of them belonged to clubs or organised groups. Perhaps this was because of the difficulty in getting from place to place, or perhaps because the large families of those days had to provide their own entertainment as there was little time or money for extras. Nevertheless, there were quite a few organisations catering for the young: the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., for instance, the Boy Scouts and the Girl Peace Scouts (founded in 1908); and of course there were private lessons in music, dancing and elocution for those who could afford them. Rather than deal with large societies, whose history has in most cases already been recorded, this chapter will describe some of the lesser-known activities offered to the children of Christchurch.

In the *Sun* of 12 May 1922 appeared an announcement that must have intrigued many children, especially those isolated in the country: "Tomorrow, a new big sister will introduce herself to you, and tell you about certain interesting competitions for girls and boys." Described as the "first children's supplement in a daily newspaper in New Zealand", it was to begin with only a small corner of the Women's Page, but it proved so popular that less than two weeks later Sister Scatterjoy, as she called herself, had to raise the age limit to seventeen to allow older children into the "Sun's Big Family" as "cousins"; at first the idea was to allow them to write stories for the younger readers, but by the end of June they were given their own part of the paper—to be known as "the Voyage of Discovery: a pleasant cruise for big boys and girls", with its participants to be called "Shipmates". This nautical theme was retained and developed over the next twenty years. The "Sunbeams", children up to the age of about thirteen, had their special corner, which soon increased to one and then to two pages in the Saturday edition.

Who was Sister Scatterjoy, who launched such a successful

venture? Her name was May C. Brown, but very little else is known about her, except that she had travelled extensively and had probably started her career as a journalist overseas. But if the details of her personal life are unknown, in her role as Sister Scatterjoy she certainly left her mark upon the children of Canterbury in the 'twenties. Not content with merely sending in stories and poems, the children began to demand closer association and a number of circles—gardening, nature study, cookery, art and so on—were formed. Wishing to share with children her own deep concern for those in less fortunate circumstances, May Brown developed the projects which were to make her "Sun's Big Family" so well-known to Canterbury people. From the very first competition, the making of story-books for sick children, to her last S.B.F. project, the construction and furnishing of a magnificent dolls' house for the isolation ward at Christchurch Hospital, the idea of service to the community was emphasised. The highlight of the year's activities was "the Christmas Mission", which brought together children, parents and other well-wishers in a great collective effort. Discarded toys were repaired, gifts made, and donations of money and ingredients received for the vast Christmas-pudding-making session. Hours and hours were spent cleaning fruit; ingredients were sorted and weighed, and finally the puddings were stirred, tied up and boiled in the Gas Company's demonstration rooms. On Christmas Day yet more helpers were called upon to deliver puddings, toys and gifts to families in need.

Perhaps May Brown's greatest achievement was the organisation of a camp for the children in the summer of 1924-5. Unfortunately there is no room here to describe their activities. One can only gasp in admiration at a woman who could tell the 10,000 members of her "family" that "to meet you at your monthly circle gatherings and at annual Sunbeam picnics was wonderful; but to have you to live with is the dream perfect", and who, at the end of over four weeks of camp life with scores of these children could still sound as sincere and enthusiastic as on the very first day. Any organiser of camps today would have to give her credit for smooth-running efficiency. Her instructions, expressed clearly and often printed in the children's pages, appear to have been followed implicitly; no one got lost or had an accident, and camp discipline, though unobtrusive, was excellent.

Six months later, when Sister Scatterjoy left the paper, her place was taken by a woman of a different character altogether.



Gentle, dreamy and imaginative, Esther Glen, or Lady Gay as she became known to thousands of children in Canterbury and beyond, seemed to have little of the organising ability of May C. Brown. "A woman impatient of committee meetings and minutes and resolutions", according to a Home Service Association tribute paid after her death, she had a knack, as children who knew her at the time recall, of forgetting times and dates, and often incurred the wrath of the neat and orderly Lady Editor, with whom she shared an office, for the clutter of her belongings and for her habit of borrowing small items which she always forgot to return. But under her leadership the Sun's Big Family became even more popular, and all children seemed to respond to her with a warmth and devotion that few others could command. She can be regarded as a pioneer in the field of encouraging self-expression in young people.

Esther Glen was no stranger to the ways of children. The second daughter in a family of twelve, she had spent many an hour of her time looking after and amusing her younger brothers and sisters. The big bay-window in the sitting-room, with its long curtains, was called into service as a stage for family plays and concerts. Her literary gifts found early expression both in stories told round the fire at night and in the family magazine she produced. After helping her mother to look after the other children for some years after she left school (a fairly common experience for an elder daughter of a large family at that time), she tried her hand at running a private kindergarten with her sister Helen, then spent several years in Australia where she gained some experience of journalism, before returning to officework in Christchurch.

From the time she took over from Sister Scatterjoy she was full of ideas and enthusiasm. "Big surprises" were planned in nearly every number. She introduced pen-names and secret code initials, special awards for those who had given outstanding service, and an office of "Mayor" elected by the children and installed in a special ceremony at the Council Chambers. It was her idea to enliven the pages with little sketches, drawn for her by Joan Mayo ("Mother Bunch") who had joined the *Sun* in 1930 and who with Esther Glen continued on the staff of the *Press* after the closing of the *Sun* in 1935. She did her best to encourage literary merit, forming a literary circle whose members all continued writing as they grew older. Nor did she forget those in need: the winter and Christmas missions became even

more important during the Depression, and the children worked also to support a cot at the Cholmondeley Children's Home (where there is still an Esther Glen Memorial Cot).

The time and effort which she devoted to her work among children probably prevented her from developing further her talent as a writer of children's books. The four that were published do show some of the contrivances of children's stories of the period (near-fatal illnesses, parents who are presumed lost at sea but who miraculously reappear), but they draw a genuine picture of the ups and downs of family life, and the descriptions of picnics, visits to farms, and camps on the riverbed would appeal to many children today. Her achievement was acknowledged in 1944 by the creation of an Esther Glen Medal, to be awarded to the best children's book published in New Zealand. As a very high standard is set, the medal is not awarded every year.

Esther Glen's death in February 1940 caused great distress to the many thousands of children and others who had known her. One can catch the note of genuine loss in the printed obituaries and tributes. Her work was carried on for a time by Mother Bunch and others, but in March 1941, partly because of a war-time lack of paper but partly, one feels, because there was no one who could fill her place, the children's page of the *Press* went out of existence.

It was probably the original success of the *Sun* venture that led the *Star* in 1925 to launch its own children's page. The name Aunt Hilda was adopted almost immediately and has been used by a succession of children's editors ever since. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these was Berta Wisely, who came to the *Star* in 1927 with no previous training in journalism. She too organised relief work during the Depression, and also helped on the *Christchurch Times* by running a children's page under the name of Rata. The hours of extra work that this involved, on top of what she did as Aunt Hilda, were all unpaid. Coming from a farming background herself, she was particularly interested in bringing country children into all possible activities, and she often travelled as far as the West Coast to hold parties for her club members. She left the *Star-Sun* (as it had become) in 1936 to live in Wellington, and for a few months she was one of the five editors-in-chief of the magazine, *Woman Today*. In 1949 she stood unsuccessfully for Parliament against Peter Fraser, who was then Prime Minister.

The *Star's* policy of providing pages "of a high ethical standard . . . for the entertainment and useful development of our young people", and the emphasis on helping others have continued to the present day. The Starlets' Club, which now numbers over 25,000 members, concerns itself with the Save the Children Fund, sponsoring three or more children overseas and also offering support to local families in need. With such large numbers, it is difficult to maintain personal contact, but Starlets are made welcome at Aunt Hilda's office on holidays and on visiting days, and a break-up party is held for them each December.

Service to the community is also the driving force behind another local "aunt". Mention Aunt Haysl to any people familiar with Christchurch, and, even if they have never heard the name Edna Neville, if they have not been part of the two and a half million children who have joined Aunt Haysl's League in the thirty-three years that she has held her position in one of Christchurch's leading stores, if their school has not enjoyed a visit from her in her capacity as an authority on Japan or as a judge of fancy dress, flower or pet shows, if they have never belonged to a group which has made use of her willing services, they will still have some idea of the person you are talking about. For Aunt Haysl is a Christchurch institution. The position was created in 1933 and four Aunt Haysls held office before 1943 when Edna Neville took over. As far as anyone knows, Hay's (now Haywright's) was the first and perhaps only store in New Zealand or overseas with an "aunt" to entertain and instruct its young shoppers. Aunt Haysl arranges a varied holiday programme, encourages children to help those in need in practical ways, and is always available to any child who wishes to discuss any topic from homework (she has a small library of books on useful topics) to personal problems. One of her most successful ventures was the weekly children's radio session which ran for thirteen years (1953-66) from 3ZB and which made her name known to children all over the country.

The first children's session on the "wireless" in Canterbury, and possibly even in New Zealand, was not Aunt Haysl's but was broadcast over 3YA in 1925 by E. J. Bell, librarian at the Canterbury Public Library, an enthusiastic radio ham who had heard similar programmes from overseas and thought the idea worth trying here. He became Uncle Jack, and a young assistant-librarian, Miss E. M. Pearce, became Aunt Edna to hundreds of child listeners all over New Zealand. Broadcasting at first from



a small room at the back of the library, they wrote plays which they performed, along with songs and stories, for their two hour-long sessions a week. With no records or tape-recorders available, an hour "live" was quite a long time to fill in; and the work was all unpaid, an extra to be fitted in after a full day's work at the library.

Another woman pioneer of broadcasting was Grace Green, who became known to listeners as the Sunshine Girl. Although intending to follow a career in journalism, she accepted a dare from one of her brothers and left her university studies to become an announcer at station 3ZC. When this station closed down she became sole announcer at New Zealand's first-commercial radio station, 3ZM. The excellent 3YA service, broadcast daily from ten a.m. to ten p.m., had a mainly middle-brow audience, whereas 3ZM introduced a bright and breezy approach with a more popular appeal. The first breakfast session in the country was Grace Green's own idea. Every morning she would bicycle two miles from Beckenham to the Sydenham furniture factory from which the programmes were broadcast, and begin the seven a.m. session by holding her old alarm-clock up to the microphone. She was always on the lookout for ways in which radio could perform a service to the community: she broadcast information about the departure and arrivals of the *Tees*, the Chatham Islands' only link with the mainland, she brought together local players to perform three-act plays once a week ("The Players of the Darkened Room"), and she ran a children's hour at five p.m. every day. Although there were no "talk-back" sessions, Grace Green found other ways of involving her audience. Her scavenger hunts—for which she read out lists of objects to be collected and brought to the studio—were enormously popular. On one occasion the autograph of an All Black was called for, and the annual meeting of the Canterbury Rugby Union was thrown into chaos by the arrival of dozens of eager autograph hunters! When 3ZM lost its advertising licence, and consequently almost all its revenue, she founded the 3ZM Radio Club, members of which paid 2s. 6d. subscription and were given requests and birthday greetings. All this meant a tremendous amount of extra work for Grace Green, especially when the numbers reached the 3000 mark.

When 3ZM closed down in 1937, Grace Green moved on to 3ZB, where she ran another very successful children's session

with Jack Maybury (Jacko). After over thirty years in broadcasting she went back to journalism, becoming women's editor of the *Star* until her retirement in 1974. She continued to conduct tours round the *Star* building until her death in May 1976.

Apart from radio plays and the occasional pantomime, there were no regular theatrical performances for children until Neta Neale formed her Canterbury Children's Theatre company in 1952. The name may be misleading: her idea was not to produce plays in which children could show off their talents as actors, but to form a group of adult players with genuine acting ability to perform plays suited to the understanding and enjoyment of children. The first performance, *The Tinder Box* (November 1952), was a great success, even financially: a profit of £6 was shown at the end of the run! But things were not easy for Neta Neale and her players at first. Rehearsal rooms had to be hired; costumes and scenery, prepared by volunteers and stored in various places all over Christchurch, had to be collected and sorted whenever they were needed. Nevertheless, the company was able to extend its performances to two a year, and by good financial management and the help of the Friends of the Canterbury Children's Theatre was able to purchase, in 1965, the old Malt-house at 71 Colombo Street. Then followed four years of hard (and voluntary) labour, cleaning and painting the hundred-year-old building (it was built in 1867), replacing much of the worn woodwork and constructing workshop and toilet facilities. The Canterbury Children's Theatre moved in in November 1969 and immediately embarked on new ventures. Classes in creative drama and movement were started, and with the promise in 1975 of a Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council grant of \$3500 plans were drawn up for a small theatre seating 130, where young people will be able to learn acting and other theatrical skills. Neta Neale was awarded an M.B.E. in 1976 for her services to children's theatre.

I have left until last one of the most important ways in which adults can instruct and entertain children out of school hours: that of encouraging reading by supplying children with books. In the provision of books for adults, Canterbury's history has not been a particularly happy one and a worthy public library in Christchurch is something still awaited. The record for library services to children is more commendable. In 1908, well before any other New Zealand library, the Canterbury Public Library made its juvenile section free to children between the ages of

ten and fifteen. New and more spacious rooms were provided over the years and the age limits were lowered. The librarian encouraged the visits of school parties to learn the use of catalogues and reference works. Emily A. Chaplin, a member of the Board of Governors of Canterbury University College, took a particular interest in the children's library, spending many hours there offering guidance to young readers, and in 1938 she formed a Children's Reading Club.

Although school libraries do not come within the scope of this chapter, the travelling library for rural schools of Canterbury and Westland deserves mention as the first effort to take books out to country children. A committee set up in 1935 by the newly-formed Association of Teachers of English sent circulars to schools, asking if they were interested in a travelling library and requesting a catalogue of their books, to make sure no duplication occurred. The response was enthusiastic, although "in some cases the reply was that their books were so few and so dilapidated that the question of duplication need not be considered". With about a hundred books given by Whitcombe & Tombs and interested individuals, £100 in donations, and a small subscription paid by each school, the scheme was put into operation. The proposed book van never eventuated, owing to lack of money, but the tutor-librarian, Mrs L. E. Rowlatt, tramped the Peninsula, even sleeping out on occasions, visiting isolated schools to talk to the children about books. Parcels containing anything up to ninety books were sent out by rail or road, to be kept at the school for a month and then exchanged. At first sleeping on the floor of her bookroom, Mrs Rowlatt eventually acquired two bookrooms besides her living quarters, and the services of two assistants. In 1942 the library elected to join the Country Library Service, ending its independent career but allowing an even better service to country schools.

It was not only children in isolated areas who were short of good reading matter. Although the Canterbury Public Library offered an excellent service it was too far away for regular visits by many city children. A group of Upper Riccarton mothers, led by Mrs Joan Fazackerley, decided in 1952 to do something about the problem. Both the Waimairi and the Paparua county councils were unwilling to finance a scheme which would serve also children outside their boundaries; and Upper Riccarton, while ineligible to join the Canterbury Public Library's pool scheme, was yet too near to enjoy the benefits of the Country Library Service. The



solution was a fund-raising campaign to provide a local library. The Opawa Library offered seven hundred surplus books at a nominal sum, and a neighbourhood book drive brought in several hundred more, with the Canterbury Public Library offering instruction on how to make repairs. The children's library was opened in a back room at the Upper Riccarton War Memorial Library, and enjoyed a success far beyond the expectations of its committee, with membership rising to almost a thousand in the first four years. The reward for much hard work came in 1955 when a bequest allowed the library to erect its own building (opened in November 1958), the very attractive Sir John McKenzie Memorial Library in Upper Riccarton.

It is interesting to note the snowballing effect of such initiative. The Opawa Library contributed books which allowed the foundation of the Upper Riccarton Children's Library, and this library in turn, when it moved to its new quarters, was able to offer three hundred books to the Gilberthorpe's Road School Committee for the establishment of a library in Hei Hei. A committee of thirteen women and one man saw the Hei Hei library opened in March 1958 with 750 volumes and an enthusiastic local membership.

The story does not stop there. Men and women, and more often the latter, will always step forward to supply what they see as a need for their children in the fields of recreation and education. Two recent examples must suffice. Mrs K. Morling, worn out with reading hour after hour to a sick child who was to be kept still at all costs, devised a scheme for recording stories on tapes, so that mothers in similar situations could have a break. The Canterbury Public Library offered support, she advertised for helpers, and became secretary of "Storyline". In the four years since it started, Storyline's volunteers (now numbering 140) have recorded stories for children, delivered books to the house-bound, and read to children and elderly people. A librarian at the Canterbury Public Library devotes almost all her time to the project, keeping reading-lists and selecting suitable books.

Another mother, who took a great interest in the books her children were reading, wished that others could share in the wealth of excellent children's literature available. With a group of friends, Mrs Anne Poole founded the Children's Book Group, the first group in New Zealand to become a corporate member of the Federation of Children's Book Groups, which has branches in Britain, Belgium, France, Hong Kong and Australia. Consisting

mainly of parents, the group has the support of librarians, teachers and others concerned with books. Well-known Christchurch children's authors Elsie Locke and Margaret Mahy have both participated in activities of the group, which include book exhibitions and special events for children. Story-telling sessions are held at various pre-school groups around the city, and ways are always being sought to bring the benefits of reading to as wide a group as possible.

In the *Help* booklet compiled for the Christchurch City Council there are now hundreds of different activities available for children. And yet a 1977 National Youth Council study reports that "fully 60 per cent of young New Zealanders between the ages of 12 and 17 spend most of their leisure time watching television for the want of anything better to do"! Clearly there is no room for complacency. Organized group activities are, of course, far from being the only way in which young people can learn to be creative and to co-operate with others. One must ask whether existing activities have the right appeal for today's children, whether they are aimed at too low an age-group, or whether they are serving needs that are now past. Initiative and innovation are still as necessary as they ever were. The Youth Council survey pointed out that the Churches no longer play a major role in arranging activities for young people, and suggested that local bodies should be doing more to fill the gap. Perhaps television could play a more active part. The response evoked by the annual "telethon" proves that television can give people a feeling of involvement with their community. The enthusiasm of the old children's pages and radio shows must be achieved in forms that appeal to the children of the 'seventies: perhaps what is needed today is a new Esther Glen or Grace Green.

# Women in the Slump

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## PART ONE: WOMEN ON THE DEFENSIVE

IN the 'thirties most women were too busy trying to make ends meet to take part in demonstrations and protest movements. There were a few dreamers who thought the Depression would usher in great social and political change but for the great majority these were years of drabness and misery. The most devastating effects of the Depression were borne by the unemployed men and their families. It seems that the wives of these men were able to cope for the first year or so because there was a feeling that better times were just around the corner. By 1933, however, the worsening economic situation gave rise to despair. An article in the *Christchurch Times* during May 1933 was headed: "LOSING HOPE, THE WOMEN'S PART. COURAGE DEPARTING. STRUGGLES WEARING THEM DOWN."

By 1933 the unemployed in Christchurch were reduced to poverty. Relief organizations reported finding families who had been living on only bread and potatoes; some were almost destitute of clothing, and had no firing or furniture.

Many families were living in rented houses and the importance of having a roof overhead made rent a greater consideration than food. Although regulations restricted the raising of rents, some tenants, because of their ignorance of legal matters, were at the mercy of unscrupulous landlords.

There was little variety in the food that most people ate. Rabbit and mince were very cheap and were eaten day after day for months on end. Bread and butter remained the staple food even though butter retained its relatively high price. Less sugar was used, although those with fruit trees were able to make jam and preserves which helped to brighten the duller meals. Sometimes the meat received from the relief depots was so tough that it was almost inedible.

Clothing was a great problem. Relief depots were established



to supply used clothes, but some women were very reluctant to seek help, because of their pride, and as a result probably suffered more than was really necessary. Many said later that to accept used clothes from a depot was one of the most humiliating things they ever had to do. The feeling that everyone would know that they had had to go to a depot to clothe themselves deeply hurt many women.

The birth rate in Christchurch, as elsewhere, fell drastically during the Depression years. The ten per cent decline in 1932 can be partly explained by an equivalent fall in the number of marriages the previous year. Even so, for many babies born during the Slump their mothers were incapable of providing more than the barest necessities of clothing. In Christchurch a Mayoress's Fund was established to purchase material to be made into babies' garments by unemployed girls and volunteers. In 1933 and 1934 three hundred and eighty mothers were helped, and most of these were given complete outfits for their children's first nine months.

Women who were able to sew were in an advantageous position; those who learned to renovate clothes given to them managed to keep their children looking neat and tidy. However, for many who were forced to accept a very low standard of living, indifference overwhelmed effort; some gave up the struggle to keep home and children clean. Children were often kept home from school during the winter term because they had no suitable warm clothes to wear.

The Depression left a permanent mark on these women. One historian has said that "most of the women making regular visits to the depots suffered from Depression nerves and had a deplorably hopeless attitude to life". Instances of women suffering from nerves seem to have been very widespread indeed. On the whole, women did not appear to be angry at what had happened to them—instead many experienced the lethargy of despair.

It is amazing how most of them managed to mend and make do. A social worker said: "I have a genuine respect for the relief workers' wives. They seldom grumble, and meet you with a smile. They do their best to keep their homes clean and their children tidy under very difficult circumstances. Give them the opportunity and they will help themselves."

In Christchurch the Mayor led community singing every Thursday, with the co-operation of 3YA. Hundreds packed the Civic Theatre to sing and for a time forget their worries. Dan

Sullivan understood that those in distress needed an escape, and he hoped that his weekly singsongs would help prevent vital money given for food from being spent on movies or alcohol.

It is not easy to appreciate today that the greatest consolation at this time was the feeling that there were so many others in the same boat; there was a sense of sharing and fellowship among those who had so little. Said one woman: "I don't know how I should get on if it were not for a Chinese family nearby. Our misfortunes have taught me to appreciate these splendid friends. It is by such real friendship and unity as this that our condition will be improved."

Many women felt shamed by the treatment they received. They thought that some of the people on the relief committees or at some of the depots could not imagine what it was like to be in need of this kind of help. Such comments as "I wonder how they can manage to live on that" hurt, coming from people who had never had to survive on relief wages. An inspector was often sent by the Relief Board to see if everything in the house that could be sold was sold; one can imagine the horror that women felt as they saw their homes disappearing piece by piece before their eyes.

Unemployment was a hard blow to the "new poor"—families of out-of-work business and professional men and skilled tradesmen, whose savings were becoming depleted by 1933. Wives found that once their husbands had lost their jobs, they were an embarrassment to more fortunate friends and were no longer asked out to afternoon-tea parties. Many women did not enjoy the luxury of a cup of tea outside their homes for years.

Married women lost their jobs during the Slump because they were expected to depend on their husbands. This was all very well if the husband was able to work. A primary school teacher in Christchurch, for instance, was laid off because she was expected to live on her husband's earnings; her husband, however, was an invalid and it took her several months to convince the authorities that it was vital for her to continue working because she was the breadwinner for the family. As Elsie Locke has commented, women "were expected to depend on a man, and if there was not a husband or father around, there might have to be a sugar daddy"! This assumption, that somewhere a man would provide, lay behind the attitude of the authorities to relief for women.

Unemployment became prevalent among single women later in

the Depression than was the case with men. The best estimate of unemployed European women is about 6760 or twelve per cent of the labour force. Most of these women were between sixteen and twenty years of age, and in some ways their position was more serious than that of men. The bulk were factory workers and domestics. Although they were subject to the unemployment levy, practically no provision was made for the relief of unemployment among women by the Unemployment Board. The granting of relief was done through Women's Unemployment Committees. In 1935 a total of 975 girls were permitted to register as unemployed in the four main centres. These accepted registrations were probably only the tip of the iceberg, representing the most desperate cases. Cookery and sewing courses were held in many centres. The girls were paid ten shillings a week and received three meals a day for the six-week course, after which they were expected to take any employment found for them. Many girls refused the jobs offered.

The Relief Board relied solely on the guidance of a Women's Advisory Commission (of three members), which worked nationally. In 1935 one member made a recommendation that relief should be reduced from 7s. 6d. to 5s. a week in an endeavour to effect savings in relief expenditure. Some members of the Christchurch Women's Committee were in favour of this reduction because it was felt that the rate of 7s. 6d. made relief "too attractive" for girls and lessened the incentive to find work. Helen Wilson, who helped with relief work, said: "There was never a time in New Zealand when a decent woman need be without food and shelter and, as a rule, some sort of wage. In crises, men came into their own as protectors of women, and there was always room for girls in domestic service. We look back and say that maids were ill paid and worse treated but already the attitudes towards maids was changing and housewives were growing more reasonable." This serves only to illustrate the remoteness of relief helpers. Helen Wilson was out of touch with the intolerable conditions suffered by some women and girls, and she also had a rather idealistic view of New Zealand men.

The Depression years dominated the outlook for young women. Teachers' training colleges were closed and university bursaries were drastically reduced. Many girls who had had hopes of university or teaching careers saw their dreams fade. To have a secure job and the promise of superannuation became the driving force in their lives. Married women encouraged their husbands



to seek government work because civil servants are seldom laid off in times of economic recession.

For most women, then, the Depression was a humiliating and frustrating experience. They suffered a loss of pride especially when they had to accept help. They did not rebel against the situation that had entrapped them; instead they felt helpless in the face of hardship. Many women were psychologically affected. The burden of struggle, of trying to make the best of what they had, was too heavy to carry. Other women because of their different temperaments were able to share their strength and cheerfulness with others through those difficult years.

#### PART TWO: WOMEN ON THE ATTACK

By 1935 conditions were becoming desperate for some women in Christchurch and they began to organise demonstrations, often noisy, sometimes violent, demanding help. The meetings were usually directed at the Mayor, D. G. Sullivan, or at the Director of the Metropolitan Relief Depot, A. B. McIntosh. On one occasion the women barred McIntosh from leaving the depot and he told the police that the women had called him "a mongrel and a rotter, and bashed my hat in". When at last he was able to leave, accompanied by a sergeant and two policemen, the women booed and jeered at him. The depot was again in turmoil some time later, with women shouting "We want bread!" The arrival of the police only provoked greater excitement and there were several scuffles before eventually the depot was cleared.

What had happened to produce such scenes in 1935 when the worst of the Depression is often thought to have been over? Part of the answer seems to lie in the operation of the relief system in Christchurch. During Christmas, relief centres overspent and by the end of January funds were very low.

The attitude of the Coalition Government did not help. In reply to a telegram from the president of the Labour Party, H. T. Armstrong, seeking aid for the hungry, official doubt was expressed as to whether such distress existed; if a register of the famished was compiled the situation would be investigated. This procrastination was unlikely to mollify the unemployed, especially as it was widely believed at the time that there was a surplus of some £680,000 in the unemployment fund. D. G. Sullivan, Labour M.P. and Mayor, was more sympathetic. Since there was no money left in the Mayor's Relief of Distress Fund, he persuaded

the city council to vote £52,850 from the Municipal Electricity Department accounts to aid the jobless. But even this was not sufficient to cope with growing demands on the Council and Sullivan had to suspend the issue of rations to relief workers. Worse was to come. Relief depots, coffers empty, closed their doors in mid-February.

It is against this unhappy background that Christchurch women became so militant. Perhaps the most vocal was Jeannie Grant, who was always to the fore in demonstrations, on several occasions clashing with the police. During one deputation, police dragged her down the council chamber stairs, while she kept screaming, "Mr Mayor, come out and see your starving people!"

The Grant family had come to New Zealand from Scotland around the turn of the century, and settled in Millerton, on the Buller coalfield, a mining town with a tradition of radicalism. The family was usually involved in politics of some kind: Mr Grant was active in union affairs and his son Archie later continued that work. Jeannie Grant did not leave it all to the men. In 1912 she founded the Women's Branch of the Socialist Party in Millerton. Like many early members of the Socialist Party she threw in her lot with the Labour Party when it was formed in 1916, and campaigned actively for H. E. (Harry) Holland when he contested the Buller seat for the first time in 1919.

In the late 1920s the Grants moved to Christchurch to seek better prospects of employment for their children. However, the Depression closed in and hopes were blighted. Jeannie Grant was soon taking an active part in the radical politics of the day. She became secretary of the Working Woman's Council, president of the Women's Branch of the Canterbury Unemployed Workers' Association, and vice-president of the Christchurch Women's Unemployment Committee. Her work in arranging Christmas parties for children of the unemployed was well remembered by many on her death in 1936. Her daughter recalls many weary hours as a child spent visiting firms to collect donations for these parties. The unemployed of Christchurch provided their own social life during the Depression—socials, dances, raffles, satirical skits, community singing, all being popular. Mrs Grant and her family took part in most of these.

Her interest in the welfare of women can be seen in her work of collecting evidence for the McMillan Committee of Inquiry, which in 1936 reported on septic abortion and its effects. However, the activities that brought her most notoriety were the demonstra-

ions. Usually about forty women congregated in the street outside the Metropolitan Relief Depot or the City Council Chambers, and a deputation of three or four placed their claims for a direct issue of rations. As a rule they were successful and rations would be given.

During one of these demonstrations Mrs Grant refused to leave the Director's office when rations were refused; she was charged with trespassing, convicted and prohibited from attending any open-air demonstrations for twelve months. This conviction aroused a storm of protest from radical women's groups throughout New Zealand, who interpreted it as an attack on their right to organise. "It is the first open attack the capitalist class have made upon us," said the Working Women's Council. "If allowed to pass it will lead to further attacks . . . we do not want to see such a courageous leader rendered useless." Though the language used was Communist rhetoric, the sentiments were more widely shared.

According to the prosecutor at the trial, the demonstrations were planned to coincide with major public events. For instance, the unemployed had cornered the Prime Minister, G. W. Forbes, on his way to farewell the Duke of Gloucester, and demanded improved conditions. The police considered that the protests were the work of a noisy minority and intimated that a few timely arrests would restore sanity. It was said that the women used "blackmail methods" to get rations. The fact that the magistrate, E. D. Mosely, did not impose either a fine or imprisonment, as he had power to do, suggests that Mrs Grant's behaviour was not, in itself, considered very serious. But the prohibition on attending open-air demonstrations seems to have been aimed at depriving the women of their most vocal leader.

The cause was taken up by a periodical named *Working Woman* and by radical feminine groups. They raised a petition and sent a deputation to Parliament. Officials admitted that the ban was causing unrest but declined to take action, because (according to *Working Woman*) Mrs Grant "would be better off at home and there might be trouble if that sort of thing were encouraged", and because "there would be so many formalities to go through". Agitation continued and in time brought victory, for the ban was lifted. The court said this was done to enable Jeannie Grant to stand as a Socialist Party candidate for the Hospital Board, but the women felt their militancy had won the day.



## The Seekers after Peace

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It is both ironical and inevitable that the pursuit of peace should often be the most divisive of issues to come before any gathering of women. Everyone agrees with the aim. It is the way to achieve it that stirs the passionate arguments.

Even that militant body, the first National Council of Women, for the sake of its own peace and unity, was obliged to beg for compromise from the nest of "extremists" in Christchurch. After considering a paper by Miss Wilhelmina Sheriff Bain, the 1897 convention endorsed this resolution: "That the National Council of Women considers war to be a savage, costly and futile method of settling disputes, hostile to that realisation of brotherhood which is essential to the progress of humanity. Therefore, the Council invites the women of Australasia to co-operate in promoting permanent and universal peace, with the simultaneous gradual and proportional disarmament of civilised peoples, and the agreement to abide by arbitratative principles. And the Council herewith instructs its secretary to communicate the resolution to the women's societies throughout the Colonies."<sup>1</sup>

Although four delegates expressed reservations, the next year in Wellington the Council went farther. After endorsing a telegram already sent to the Czar of Russia praising his "peerless proposal" for a scheme of general disarmament, it resolved that: "The Council deprecates any project likely to involve Australasia in the participation of warfare, and strenuously protests against any Imperial consideration of these Colonies as a recruiting ground for European militarism."<sup>2</sup> The resolution, moved by Kate Sheppard and seconded by Ada Wells, was based on a paper by Miss Bain.

By 1900 New Zealand was a recruiting ground for the Boer War. Opinions were divided about the nature of the war and Kate Sheppard, presiding, was anxious not to split the convention in Dunedin. She asked Miss Sheriff Bain to keep to general principles

and avoid the crisis topic, but at short notice it was too late to change her prepared paper.<sup>3</sup> The resolution was innocuous, asserting that "difficulties between nations are always capable of peaceful settlement if mediatory methods be employed in time".<sup>4</sup> But Miss Bain proclaimed that she was neither pro-British nor pro-Boer, but pro-humanity, and demanded honour for the illustrious men and women who had protested against the war. Miss Roberts (Women's Christian Temperance Union, Christchurch) said she was sorry to see a spirit of bigotry, for true patriotism did not always consist in fighting for one's country but could be found in standing up for justice, truth and righteousness. Mrs Louisa Blake (Canterbury Women's Institute) said the best time to speak against war was when the war was on; she would not be shut down by those who thought that to speak was treasonable. Mrs Sievwright of Gisborne said brave men were being sacrificed to fill the pockets of millionaires with the gold and diamonds of South Africa.<sup>5</sup>

When these "pro-Boer" sentiments were reported, the Mayor of Dunedin refused to take the chair at the Saturday conversazione. Controversy was not assuaged by explanations that the delegates were allowed free speech and their utterances "did not express the convictions of the Council as a whole".<sup>6</sup>

Subsequent conventions continued to approve of "peace and arbitration". In 1903 Miss Sheriff Bain was asserting that the ideals of peace were more worthy than those of war: "Girls should not praise a martial display but express loathing for soldierdom. Parents should not buy toy cannons for their children, and no battle pictures should be allowed into our homes and schools."<sup>7</sup> The W.C.T.U. carried on its peace education after the N.C.W. broke up, and the Canterbury Women's Institute was solidly pacifist. They soon faced another testing time.

On most subjects New Zealand had no foreign policy of its own, although Premier Seddon could, and did, speak out in Imperial councils. Loyalty was intense towards the Empire and the armed forces upon which this isolated outpost felt that its safety depended. On the other hand, "militarism" was widely considered a hateful aspect of sabre-rattling nations such as the Kaiser's Germany, which lacked the liberties upon which Britons prided themselves.

Through the Defence Acts of 1909 and 1911, New Zealand introduced one of its less famous "firsts"—peacetime conscription. Boys were required to register and drill from the age of fourteen

—something which had never happened in Britain. Resistance was considerable. The 10,245 persons prosecuted in two and a half years<sup>8</sup> were not all conscientious objectors; more often they had simply shied away from the unpleasantness of drill parades. But there were hundreds of objectors on principle, with floods of meetings both indoors and outdoors, deputations, pamphlets, newspaper arguments, and other features of mass campaigns.

The heart of it all was in Christchurch, the birthplace of both the Passive Resisters' Union and the National Peace and Anti-Conscription Council. The P.R.U., consisting solely of young objectors, rose to 450 members in Christchurch alone, and published a monthly journal called *The Repeal*. With seventeen per cent of the population, Canterbury produced about forty-four per cent of the prosecutions, a third of the convictions and thirty-three out of the seventy-eight men imprisoned.<sup>9</sup>

Women who had so recently won the vote found an additional reason to protest. "Today the Defence Act overrides the Electoral Act. The extraordinary and barbarous penalty of disfranchisement is being inflicted on youths who refuse to become conscripts and combatants."—this from "A Woman" in *The Repeal* of March 1913. Eveline Cunningham wrote to the *Lyttelton Times*: "I have lifted up my small voice against compulsory military training and got into more hot water and quarrelled with more dear friends over it than anything else in my life. But now I feel inclined to get into hotter and hotter water and quarrel with more and more of my dearest friends."<sup>10</sup>

Mrs Rose Atkinson made a point of attending court to support the passive resisters. Deputations of mothers were active in the city. Their sentiments, however, were anathema in the country districts. When Sarah Saunders Page, Ada Wells and Mrs Nuttall went to Ashburton, some hundred and fifty women listened in the afternoon but only four supported their stand. The evening meeting was a "howling wilderness" for two hours and even the Mayor could not get a word in to explain why he had agreed to take the chair.<sup>11</sup>

Initiatives included a petition of women to the Churches, to convey "our sorrowful dissatisfaction with their apathetic attitude in regard to the persecution of those who, in upholding their conscientious conviction of right, decline to comply with the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act".<sup>11</sup> There was also a fiery open letter to the Mayor of Christchurch, published by Ida Bradley after he had gone back on his promise to a deputation



of sixteen women to allow the use of the Council Chamber for a discussion meeting about the Act.<sup>12</sup> Through 1913 and 1914 the campaign became more intense—until it was cut short by the outbreak of the Great War.

Many objectors of both sexes stuck to their convictions and took the consequences, but a far greater number enthusiastically supported the “war to end war”. New Zealand’s contribution was amazingly high. More than forty per cent of men between twenty and forty-five went overseas, and nearly a sixth of these did not return. Women worked on the patriotic committees, on the farms (which had a quarter of the work force at that time), and in transport and industry. After this generous taste of independence and work experience, things were never the same again. Women were expected to retire gracefully to their homes and assert no claim to employment sorely needed by the returned soldiers. But times had changed. Every home bore its reminders of the terrible cost of the war; and it soon appeared that neither peace nor democracy had been saved after all.

It remained true that “for the great majority of New Zealanders world history was a drama to be observed from a distance without any notion of audience participation.”<sup>13</sup> But at the first dominion meeting of the League of Nations Union in 1922, Ellen Melville of Auckland moved that New Zealand should be represented independently at all League conferences;<sup>14</sup> and a few citizens were beginning to see that the promotion of peace could be part of the foreign policy of one’s own country. Education was an important side of L.N.U. work. However, few Christchurch women took a prominent role, other than Mrs Annie Fraer (a founder and life member) and the tireless Elizabeth Taylor, widow of T. E. Taylor.

The new organisations which sprouted in the 1920s had other objectives and were not ready to involve themselves in controversies. The Canterbury Women’s Institute continued small and faithful, and the W.C.T.U. with its long-established Peace Department asked the Government in 1927 to substitute physical education for military training.<sup>15</sup> In 1930 compulsory military training was in fact dropped, but the reasons were economic. It was still provided for in the law.

There was joyful acclamation everywhere for the Kellogg Peace Pact of 1928, through which the nations agreed to renounce war as a means of settling their disputes. Was the W.C.T.U. aim of “arbitration” to be realised at last? Alas, it was only a paper

agreement soon trampled by events. The 'thirties saw a series of blatant acts of aggression: Japan against Manchuria and then China, Italy against Abyssinia, Nazi Germany against Austria and Czechoslovakia, and the war in Spain.

The wide Peace Movement in New Zealand had three distinct if intermingling currents. One sought a more positive contribution from this country in world affairs; another, the pacifists, sought to extend the renunciation of war and violence; the third sought to impose a barrier of collective security against Fascism, which was seen as the main enemy of peace.

Pacifism continued strong in Christchurch. Apart from the veteran Sarah Saunders Page, women did not play any prominent part but were active in the day-to-day work. Mrs Page became secretary of the No More War Movement after its founder, her son Alfred, had died.<sup>16</sup> The Peace Pledge Union and the Christian Pacifist Society were led by men.

In 1936 the W.C.T.U. under its peace superintendent, Elizabeth Taylor of Christchurch, undertook the circulation of the "People's Mandate to Governments" initiated by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. There was a very wide mix of assisting groups and 21,000 signatures were collected, one-third of them in North Canterbury. The Mandate read in part: "We are determined to end war. War settles no problems. War brings economic misery, suffering and death to us and our children. . . . We demand that our Governments . . . stop immediately all increase of armaments and armed forces; use existing machinery for the peaceful settlement of present conflicts; secure a world treaty for immediate reduction of arms as a step towards world disarmament."<sup>17</sup>

In 1937 the first real attempt to co-ordinate the peace movements was made by the National Peace Council led by C. R. N. Mackie.<sup>18</sup> This body (not to be confused with the later N.Z. Peace Council) had been centred in Christchurch since 1911 and its affiliations included the Society of Friends, League of Nations Union, No More War Movement and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. The Peace Pledge Union extending from England was closely associated. Canterbury was less concerned with the Movement against Fascism and War, which attracted trade union, pacifist, and some political support in two large North Island conferences.

The magazine *Woman Today* attempted to co-ordinate the peace efforts of women. It gave generous space to various view-



points but tended increasingly towards the idea of a collective security shield against aggression, supported by activities like boycotting Japanese goods in protest against bombings in China.

In 1938 the Y.W.C.A. brought to New Zealand a distinguished Englishwoman, Kathleen Courtney, Secretary of the Women's International Peace and Disarmament Committee at Geneva. She emphasised that work for peace was not simply a matter of wishing, feeling or believing, but of knowing, and of coming to grips with realities in the world.<sup>19</sup>

Later that year Miss A. M. Jameson of Christchurch, Dominion President of the N.C.W., went on from an international council meeting to the "remembrance days" held in Paris by the Women's World Committee for Peace. Although these meetings were left-liberal and partisan, Miss Jameson took her place and spoke of New Zealand efforts towards closer relationships in the Pacific. She wrote: "I gathered that the real enemy of peace is Fascism and that war must first be made on it. Then we may expect peace, and only then. There seemed to be little hope of what I had always regarded as the true and only intelligent way of settling differences—mutual agreement after due discussion on both sides."<sup>20</sup> But the Christchurch N.C.W., headed by Miss Havelaar, praised Neville Chamberlain, Britain's Prime Minister, for his efforts to secure peace through his meetings with Hitler,<sup>21</sup> and the Munich crisis brought strong declarations of public opinion both for and against "Appeasement". As it turned out, Chamberlain's "peace in our time" was very short-lived. After one more year Hitler was confronted by armed force and New Zealand drawn into the Second World War.

Although New Zealand's losses in human life were less than in World War I, the production effort was more intense. In 1939 there were 25,700 women employed in factories; by 1943 there were 37,000. In 1939 only five per cent of government clerical workers were women; in 1947 there were twenty-five per cent. Some 75,000 women were active in voluntary work through the 250 district committees of the Women's War Service Auxiliary.<sup>22</sup>

In the postwar years returned servicemen were catered for by an efficient rehabilitation scheme and there was no shortage of employment. The wider part played by women in community life was accepted as permanent. In 1947 the Christchurch N.C.W. held a Women's Rally, presided over by Mary McLean and with thirty-two speakers drawn from all over New Zealand; they invited women to wake up to their responsibilities and increase



the status and reputation gained during the war years.<sup>23</sup> Peace was not emphasised there but was the whole purpose of a much larger Women's Peace Rally in 1948.

This crowded, enthusiastic, all-day rally did not throw any controversial spanners into the works of the N.C.W., with its wide range of affiliations, but it did affirm that peace is women's business, and gave clear support to the United Nations. "The state of the world today imposes upon all women the urgent duty of using their influence to the utmost, both individually and through their numerous organisations, to promote mutual understanding and goodwill among people everywhere so that the establishment of peace and righteousness may be hastened."<sup>24</sup> It did not, however, reflect any general realisation that mankind had entered a new era with the invention of nuclear weapons. Few people had yet grasped the significance of the atomic energy revolution which would give the human race the capacity to destroy itself.

The challenge presented to New Zealanders the following year was bound up with the "Cold War" which opened a rift among the victorious allies. The Government made sure of winning a "Yes" vote in the 1949 referendum on the re-introduction of peacetime conscription. Most organisations kept clear of this controversial issue, and those who did express an opinion (including the Churches) generally supported conscription. Only the Canterbury Housewives' Union came out solidly against it, and took part in a street march under its own banner. Women's meetings, for and against, called respectively by the R.S.A. and the Peace Union, were each reported as having attracted an audience of about forty.<sup>25</sup>

The study of international affairs was given impetus by the new Pan Pacific Women's Association, which must be given credit for focusing attention on the region to which geographically New Zealand belongs and, indeed, seems to have been the first New Zealand organisation of any kind to do this. The first conference in Honolulu in 1928 arose from a conversation four years earlier between the director of the Pan Pacific Union there and the Hon. Mark Cohen of Dunedin, a veteran worker for education, social welfare and women's rights. Mrs Annie Fraer of Christchurch headed the N.Z. delegation, and Mrs Elizabeth Taylor became chairman of the N.Z. branch when it was formed in 1931.

After the disruption of the war years, the 1952 conference was held in Christchurch, and 125 delegates came from twenty countries to discuss four topics: the status of women, education, economic interdependence and social conditions. Miss Amy Kane of Wellington was then national president, and an international vice-president. The great success of the conference owed much to the energetic work of the national secretary, Mary McLean, who was simultaneously president of the Christchurch N.C.W. Hospitality and outside activities were particularly well arranged to suit the varied interests of the overseas visitors, who included women from Papua and Samoa.<sup>26</sup> Lectures, discussions, study groups and social activities have continued ever since. In 1955 the name was changed to Pan Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association. Important work has been done in Christchurch to assist students from this wider region.

Events of the 1950s which burned themselves into public consciousness were the hydrogen bomb tests at Bikini and elsewhere. Information circulated widely about the effects of radioactivity upon human and other life, and an increasing number of people realised that in a war fought with such weapons there could be no victors, only losers. Moral revulsion was strong among the Churches and the important Convention on International Relations held in Auckland in 1954 was the result of churchmen's initiative. In 1957 the public and social affairs committees of the dioceses of Canterbury and Otago decided to press for the banning of nuclear weapons by international agreement, and so did the North Canterbury Synod of the Methodist Church, among others.<sup>27</sup>

Women were stepping out more boldly at the same time. Christchurch was one of the first centres to form a local organisation through which developed the N.Z. Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, with headquarters here, and women shouldered an important part of the leadership. The chief spokesman was Mary Woodward, who served both as Christchurch secretary and national secretary. She and her colleagues were not afraid of being political and worked actively for a change in New Zealand foreign policy which would reject all complicity with the manufacture and use of nuclear weapons.

But despite descriptions of the physical effects of radioactive explosions, constantly featured in the newspapers, it was difficult to achieve united action. A combined women's meeting sponsored by the C.N.D. in 1961 did not achieve N.C.W. support and the

president, Doreen Grant, spoke as an individual. The meeting resolved: "Believing that the good in any way of life cannot and need not be protected by harming the innocent in lands and times far distant from the present disputes, that this meeting of Christchurch women address an urgent and heartfelt appeal to the Governments of the U.S.S.R., the United States, the United Kingdom and France to abandon nuclear weapon testing for all time, and work sincerely for a total and controlled test ban."<sup>28</sup> When Mary Woodward delivered this message to each embassy in Wellington, she was politely received and given almost identical answers: the bomb was needed for self-protection.<sup>29</sup>

Other women's groups spoke up more and more frequently. The Countrywomen's Institutes in 1962 sought to persuade all governments "to reduce experimental nuclear explosions to an absolute minimum"<sup>30</sup>—a long step for an all-embracing organisation. That year a new group was launched by Louise Aldrich and Shirley Ross, Women for Peace, along lines similar to the Women Strike for Peace movement in America; it asked women to raise their voices "in support of increased international understanding and a world freed from the threat of war".<sup>31</sup>

That year also, 1962, the nuclear testing issue came closer to home with the first indications that France intended to move her testing ground from the Sahara to the South Pacific. The nuclear-weapon-free-zone petition (which gained over 80,000 signatures and "most favourable consideration" after a stirring debate in Parliament) was launched in 1963 at a public meeting in Christchurch. One of the four women speakers, Miss P. M. Robinson, principal at Girls' High School, remarked that in the past she had kept clear of such petitions and organisations, "in fact anything that smacked of the lunatic fringe"—but she knew there was nothing cranky about this one.<sup>32</sup>

This peak of intense discussion and activity fell away when the Partial Test-Ban Treaty was signed and the super-powers transferred their nuclear tests to underground sites. It is clear that in New Zealand, as in Europe and America, much of the concern had more to do with public health than the prevention of nuclear war. When radioactivity in the atmosphere was lessened, people were prepared to excuse the menacing growth of nuclear arsenals and the elaboration of ever more sophisticated weapons.

There was, however, a new wave of protest over atmospheric nuclear testing in French Polynesia. In 1972 peace ships were sent to the testing zone and later the Kirk Government captured



headlines by sending a naval frigate and by taking a case to the International Court of Justice.

What has been achieved by the experience of the past eighty years? Is it true, as stated at the inaugural meeting of Women for Peace, that "women as the givers of life are particularly concerned about the survival of children" and by nature are inclined to work for peace? It must be said that in Canterbury, as elsewhere, the women have not come near to equalling men in activity or influence.

Is it true that "when individuals take as their standard of living the Golden Rule . . . then peace and justice will prevail"—as claimed in the programme of the 1948 N.C.W. Peace Rally? It is a very long road and history shows no simple transition from goodwill among individuals to goodwill among nations.

Have we proved that "women can make a worthwhile contribution to world peace by bringing up children in friendship, tolerance and understanding, by teaching them to think clearly and have the courage of their convictions"? (This from Doreen Grant at the women's peace meeting in 1961.) It makes sense, but we can hardly teach the children unless we first have the courage of our own convictions.

The times when Canterbury has had a number of women ready to stand up for their views in public seem to have been at the beginning and the end of these eighty years, the times when public interest in the nation's affairs has been at a high level. In the middle period, even during the challenging 1930s, very few local women were active in work for peace and very few women's organisations had much to say.

One theme raised at the beginning has come right through: support for disarmament and the peaceful settlement of disputes through arbitration. Tribute must be paid to the W.C.T.U. for this continuous thread.

In the early years when New Zealand lacked independence it seemed to most people that nothing this small country could do would make any difference to international war or peace. Only since 1944 has New Zealand had a Foreign Affairs Department. A readiness to speak up on world affairs has grown with the means to find out about them.

It is no wonder that the moral and educative aspects of work for peace have received the greatest emphasis among women; and they are the least upsetting. But in practice the pursuit of peace

is tied up with politics in its widest sense, including the moulding of public opinion as well as the decision-making in Parliament and elsewhere. Women's role in this has suffered from the same disabilities as in other public affairs and politics generally.

In a way, the reluctance of women's organisations to allow debates which might rock the boat reflects an extension of the part which women in the family have long been accustomed to play: that of smoothing over unhappy differences. But modern feminists have rejected this role of tranquillizer. They have made it clear that if women cannot develop their own viewpoint in all fields, and stick up for it, they cannot complain if they have to take what they are given.

The issues of peace and war have become issues of life and death for everyone. The enormity of the nuclear peril and the sheer pace of change are difficult to grasp, but world events have already influenced the women's movement and women have likewise increased their own influence on the world in which they live.

## APPENDIX

### Women in North Canterbury Local Government

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- Akaroa County Council: Jenny Lillian Inwood 1977-.
- Borough of Ashburton: Edith Jessie Childs 1962-4; Joy Myrtle Harris 1977-; Beatrice Josephine Oakley 1971-5, 1977-.
- Cheviot County Council: Norma May Walls 1974.
- Christchurch City Council: Ada Wells 1917-9; Elizabeth Reid McCombs 1921-31, 1933-5; Anne Elizabeth Herbert 1927-9; Annie Isobel Fraer 1929-33; Mabel Bowden Howard 1933-5, 1938-41, 1950-9, 1963-8; Teresa Green 1941-5, 1947-56; Mary Elizabeth McLean 1941-65; Alma Schumacher 1956-68; Helen Lavinia Garrett 1968-; Mary Dorothy Batchelor 1971-7; Mollie McGrade Clark 1971-; Nancy May Webber Sutherland 1971-7; Vicki Susan Buck 1975-; Noala Ellen Massey 1977-.
- Christchurch Drainage Board: Mabel Bowden Howard 1937-44.
- Christchurch Transport Board: Elizabeth Reid McCombs 1927-35; Louisa Emily Macfarlane 1961-8, 1971-; Honor Margaret Bonisch 1974-; Helen Lavinia Garrett 1974-; Barbara Brooke 1974-7.
- Ellesmere County Council, Lincoln Advisory Committee: Dawn Gallagher 1977-; Marion Townsend 1977-.
- Heathcote County Council: Marette June Taylor 1974-7; Betty Kerford Roberts 1977-.
- Hurunui County Council: Heather Mary Little 1974-.
- Kaiapoi Borough Council: Florence Ruby Jane Clemett 1962-74; Lynette Anne Clark 1974-7; Margaret Orpath Cleland 1977-.
- Lyttelton Borough Council: Irene Alice Gilmour 1947-53; Gladys Ethel Boyd 1947-66; Alice Myrtle Tyro 1968-71; Dorothy Thursfield Gillard 1971-4; Mary Viola Gass 1974-7; Mary Jean Cretney 1977-; Sheila Edwards 1977-.



Malvern County Council: Margery Gwen Clucas 1977-; Darfield Community Council 1977-.

North Canterbury Hospital Board: Sarah Ensom 1910-3; Eveline Cunnington 1910-3; Emma Wilson 1910-21; Rachel Christie 1913-9; Catherine Green 1915-22; Anne Elizabeth Herbert 1919-29; Sarah Saunders Page 1922-3; Eveline Anne Mary Roberts 1923-7, 1941-4; Elizabeth Reid McCombs 1925-34; Teresa Green 1927-59; Effie Julia Margaret Cardale 1929-31; Jane A. Bean 1931-50; Isabella Parlane 1934-5, 1937-41; Jessie E. Mackay 1935-8, 1941-62; Louisa Emily Macfarlane 1938-41, 1950-9, 1962-8, 1971-4; Jessie N. Clarke 1941-50; Mary Elizabeth McLean 1941-7, 1957-9; Mary Ann Ellen 1947-50; Gladys E. Boyd 1948-59; Mabel Bowden Howard 1950-8, 1962-8; Agnes Mathison 1953-9; Betty F. Webb 1959-71; Alison Lucy MacGibbon 1962-74; Edith June Gardiner 1968-; Phyllis Margaret Zeff 1968-74; Diana Jackson 1971-4; Karen A. Tapara 1971-4; Mollie McGrade Clark 1971-; Jean A. Smith 1971-; Margaret Helen Ferner 1974-; Caroline Branen Cartwright 1977-.

Paparua County Council: Lesley Dawn Keast 1977-, Hornby District Community Council 1974; Orma Christine Munro 1976-; Mary Isabel Corbett, Hornby District Community Council 1977-; Jean Evelyn Woodham 1968-77, Hornby District Community Council 1968-77.

Rangiora Borough Council: Lynda Jean Bamford 1968-72; Winifred Elizabeth Borrell 1968-77; Dorothy Mary Harris 1974-.

Sumner Borough Council: Evelyn Anne Mary Roberts 1938-41.

Waimairi County Council: Hazel Maureen Tait 1975-; Margaret Elizabeth Murray 1977-.

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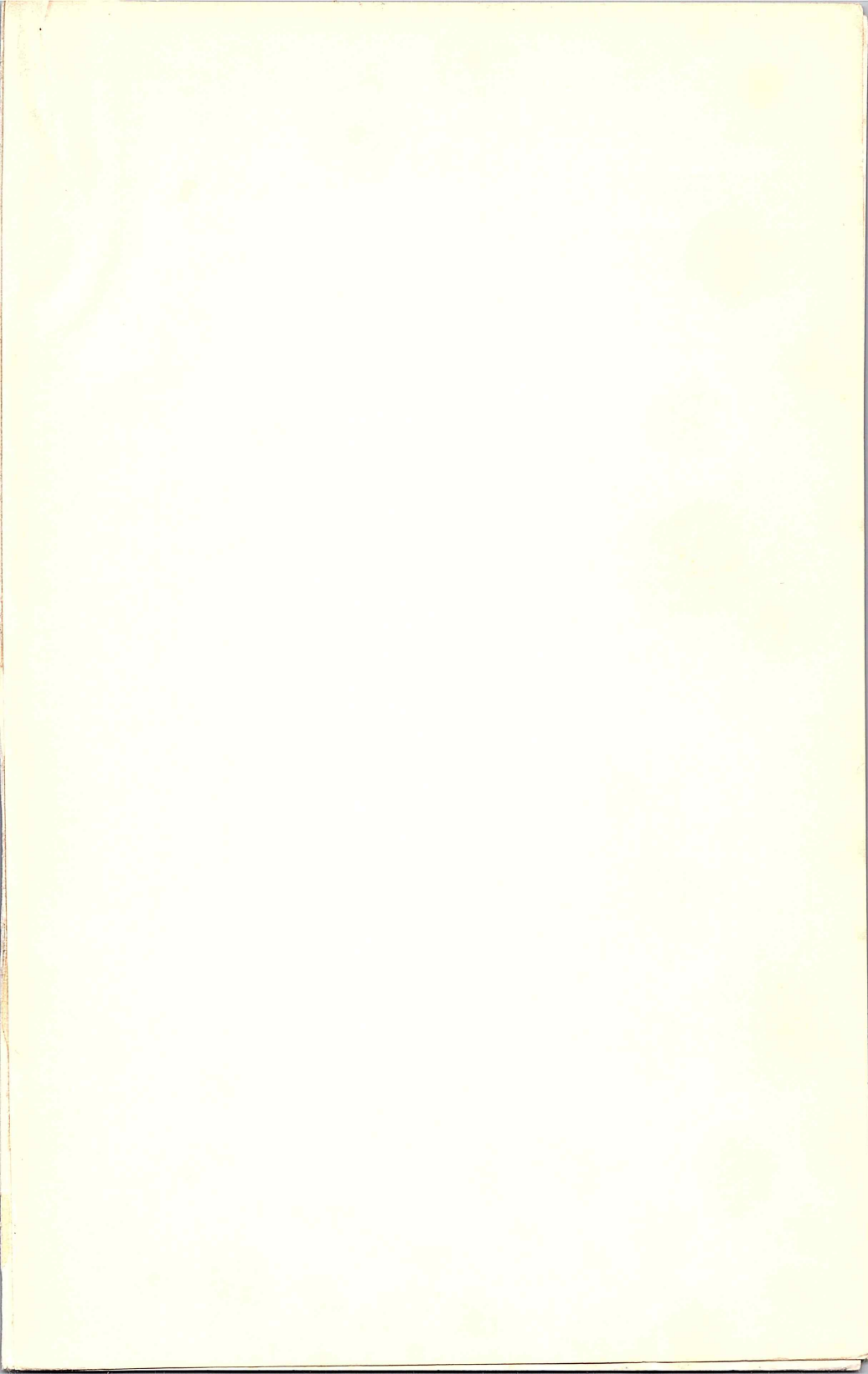
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*Who was Sister Scatterjoy?*

*What did people think of Ettie Rout in the 1890s, cycling in trousers, shirt and sandals?*

*When were hooks placed on the front of Christchurch buses?*

*Where did Te Wai Pounami College begin?*

CANTERBURY WOMEN, since they gained the vote in 1893, have continued to fight for a wide range of causes — some important, some trivial; some lost, some won. This book records public and domestic activities of Maori and pakeha women in both town and country. It describes the hazards of childbirth under primitive medical care, the misery of the Depression years, the physical slog of pre-electricity housekeeping; it shows also the lighter side, when new ideas on everything from sports to fashions, and new gadgets like the bicycle and the typewriter, were starting to change women's role in society. Canterbury has produced some remarkable women, particularly in the fields of education, broadcasting, politics, health and social reform. This is a valuable account of what they have achieved.

*Who was New Zealand's first woman M.P.?*

*What was an O'Cedar Mop?*

*What city official was called "a mongrel and a rotter" and had his hat bashed in by angry women?*

*How many women have served on Canterbury local bodies?*

*What distinction was held by the Kaiapoi Kiwi Girls Hockey Club when it was formed in 1897?*

*Who started the fuss over women serving on juries?*